RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CATAWBA VALLEY

J. Alex Mull

&

Gordon Boger

Recollections of the Catawba Valley

by
J. Alexander Mull
and
Gordon Boger

Foreword by
W.H. Plemmons

APPALACHIAN CONSORTIUM PRESS
Boone, North Carolina



The Appalachian Consortium was a non-profit educational organization composed of institutions and agencies located in Southern Appalachia. From 1973 to 2004, its members published pioneering works in Appalachian studies documenting the history and cultural heritage of the region. The Appalachian Consortium Press was the first publisher devoted solely to the region and many of the works it published remain seminal in the field to this day.

With funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities through the Humanities Open Book Program, Appalachian State University has published new paperback and open access digital editions of works from the Appalachian Consortium Press.

www.collections.library.appstate.edu/appconsortiumbooks

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons BY-NC-ND license. To view a copy of the license, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses.

Original copyright © 1983 by the Appalachian Consortium Press.

ISBN (pbk.: alk. Paper): 978-1-4696-3837-9
ISBN (ebook): 978-1-4696-3839-3

Distributed by the University of North Carolina Press
www.uncpress.org

This page intentionally left blank

This page intentionally left blank

The Appalachian Consortium wishes to express appreciation to the following individuals and institutions for their assistance in the printing of this book:

The Appalachian Collection, Belk Library,
Appalachian State University
Catawba County Historical Museum
Crossnore School, Inc.
Mr. and Mrs. Albert Deal
The News Herald, Morganton, North Carolina
David Lane

This page intentionally left blank

Foreword

Recollections of the Catawba Valley *is a selection of stories chosen from a much longer list of titles by two long-time, well-known citizens of that valley. The late Alex Mull was of one of the first families of that area. Gordon Boger, though born elsewhere, is almost considered native to it. Many of their "Recollections" have appeared before, primarily in* **The News Herald** *of Morganton to which each contributed rather regularly.*

While the stories themselves are classified by the authors and publishers as recollections, some of them are historical in content. Naturally, in such a collection, some are hand-me-downs, variations of "thrice-told tales," and a few of them are not directly related to the Valley, except by authorship. Yet, they are of the same flavor—Appalachia, authentic, and otherwise.

Keen reader interest in these "Recollections" will be largely localized in the Catawba Valley and among readers of Morganton's **The News Herald** *where they are on favorite reading lists. But, those of us outside the Valley should not be misled. Lovers of local history, folklorists, storytellers, and those with a yen for piedmont*

and mountain flavor will enjoy the contributions of these two good storytellers. They prove that, when combined, good storytelling and good writing make for good reading.

Good reading, plus the setting or locale, was the main reason the Appalachian Consortium chose these "Recollections" for one of its two major publications for this year. It is a worthy addition to similar previous publication contributions of the Consortium through such volumes as **Bits of Mountain Speech, A Right Good People, Tall Tales From Old Smoky,** *and the like.*

Time spent reading these "Recollections" will not end when the reading itself has been finished. That time will lengthen and increase continually as you re-read and reflect on "Recollections."

W.H. Plemmons

Table of Contents

Before the White Man 1
McDonalds, McDowells, and McPhersons 6
The Long, Long Trail 10
Pioneer Farming 14
Martin's Ghost Still Rides 17
Bechtler's Gold 20
The Ridge Where Jonas Froze 22
Courthouse Chaos 26
Hatching a Dream 31
Fate Lane 37
Overmountain Men 42
The Generation Gap 51
Sun to Sun 56
Buckeyes for Rumatiz 60
Sayin's and Meanin's 63
Snake'ing the Kivers 65
House Raisings and Parlors 70
Much Obliged 73
Coon Huntin' 76
The Valley's First Industry 79

Kickapoo Medicine Company 88
Brown Mountain Spooks 91
The Ice Man 94
Victorian Foibles 97
Don't Slam the Door 100
Longjohns and Featherbeds 104
Winning is Everything 107
Child's Play 110
Tin Lizzies and Whimmey-Dittles 114
Shooting the Anvil 118
Childhood Memories 121

This page intentionally left blank

This page intentionally left blank

Before the White Man

America was first discovered about twenty thousand years ago by people from Asia, according to information collected by anthropologists. These people crossed the land bridge between Siberia and Alaska in pursuit of the large herds of animals, and followed them into the valleys east of the Rocky Mountains.

Here in the Catawba Valley, artifacts have been found that date back 10 to 12 thousand years. These people were hunters and gatherers, using animals for food, clothing, and shelter. They traveled in small family groups, seldom staying long in any one place.

It is hard to visualize now what a veritable paradise this Catawba River Valley was in the early days, before the advent of the white man. Virgin forests were loaded down with fruits and nuts. Game animals, birds, and fish of all kinds were plentiful. Abundant rainfall and clear mountain streams guaranteed the annual production of fruits, wild grains, and edible roots. About four to five thousand years ago new ideas in hunting, along with some primitive farming and village life, were developed by these people.

About 500 B.C., the Indians in this area

began to make pots of clay to replace those of stone they had previously used. They began to grow fields of corn and vegetables. Instead of wandering in small family groups, they began to settle in permanent or semi-permanent locations, and villages were established. The bow and arrow replaced the spear as their major weapon. Their villages grew in size until they resembled towns. Suddenly, about 1500 A.D., their lifestyle was violently changed.

Indians from the south, known as the Invaders, who were better equipped and organized, with copper breastplates, copper axes, and a knowledge of warfare, invaded these tranquil villages and drove the farmers from their homes into the northern and western parts of the state. There they remained until their children and grandchildren obtained guns from the Europeans and drove them back south.

Indian tribes were distinguished by different languages, dress, and customs. Each group or village had its own chief and council only loosely affiliated with other groups of the same tribe. They, therefore, were never able to act in a unified fashion against aggression. It has been estimated that if all Indians in America had been united against the white invaders, they could have repulsed the whites with little difficulty. In effect, it would have taken many additional years to conquer them, and they would probably have been able to retain much more of

their own territory. As it was, the various tribes fought each other with the same fierceness they displayed against the whites.

In this immediate area there were two major and one minor tribe when the first white settlers began coming into the Catawba Valley area. They were the Cherokee, the Catawba, and the Creek.

The Cherokee were the most numerous, industrious, and intelligent. They were also, along with the Creek, the most hostile toward the early settlers. The Catawba, with one exception, were uniformly friendly and helpful to the whites and acted as a barrier against the more hostile tribes.

Historians think that the Cherokee were related to the Iroquois and migrated south from the Northern states in search of better hunting grounds. Here in the lush Catawba River Valley and across the South Mountains into South Carolina and Georgia, they found a veritable paradise of game and farming lands. The Catawba River was named for the Catawba tribe, who were perhaps the first to inhabit this area, so an inevitable conflict arose between the Cherokee and Catawba tribes.

According to Indian legends, this conflict developed into a full-fledged war over the Catawba Valley that saw hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of warriors killed in battle. The legend is that after this big battle, the chiefs of

the two tribes finally got together to smoke the pipe of peace and to divide the territory between them. The Catawba would occupy the territory east of the river, and the Cherokees claimed that west of the river. It is said that this treaty was never broken by either side.

Many people do not know that in the early days the Cherokee Indians had their own farming lands, a republican form of government, and a system of home industries and education. In later years, under the leadership of the great Chief Sequoia, they developed a written alphabet and printing press.

It is a matter of record that at least one chief was a friend of Jefferson, Lincoln, and Jackson. Only one vote in Congress prevented the State of Cherokee from becoming a reality. It is also true that this tribe of Indians were our allies during the War of 1812. Let's see how they were rewarded.

As our ancestors came to this area in increasing numbers, the Cherokee were pushed further and further westward into the Blue Ridge Mountains by treaty, purchase, and confiscation toward their mortal enemies: the Creeks.

Being more numerous, the Cherokee were able to push the Creeks into what is now Tennessee and Kentucky. This left the Cherokee with very little farming land but excellent game country, so they were able to survive. The greed of our ancestors for more and more land con-

tinued until these people were forced to fight for their very existence. In efforts to preserve peace and gain living space, they sent their Chiefs to Washington to see the "Great White Father," but to no avail. A combination of fear, greed, and propaganda aroused so much feeling that in 1838, the Union Army came to our mountains with orders to remove by force the whole Indian Tribe to what is now Oklahoma. During this forced march, 4,000 Indians died along the way in what has come to be called "The Trail of Tears."

Some of the Cherokee chose to risk the death penalty, which had been imposed against those refusing to move, rather than leave their beloved mountains. They hid in coves and rugged peaks of the Nantahalas and other inaccessible retreats until the great hue and cry had died down. Since these rugged hills were worthless for farming, the remaining few Cherokee finally established small huts and villages until the government eventually recognized their right to own land and set aside an Indian Reservation. There are now over 6,000 Cherokee Indians in the Eastern Tribe with nearly half of them living on the Qualla Reservation in Cherokee, North Carolina.

McDonalds, McDowells, and McPhersons

They were called "Scotch-Irish," the hardy pioneers who were among the first to settle permanently in the Blue Ridge Mountain country. The Scotch-Irish name, however, is somewhat confusing since these people were not Irish at all.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth, practically all of the Northern Ireland (Ulster) became the property of the English Crown by confiscation, conquest, and the right of Escheat. The Irish who survived were moved to the South of Ireland. During the next fifty years more than 200,000 settlers, mainly from Scotland, occupied this land in the northern part of Ireland. Hence the name "Scotch-Irish," or more accurately, Scotsmen from Ireland. These Scots were Protestant Presbyterians, and they didn't mix well with the hot headed Irish Catholics. The conflict between these two groups has been violent and bloody for centuries, and is still boiling today.

The Scots, who have always been noted for their thrift and industry, prospered to such an extent that the merchants in England became jealous and had laws enacted to suppress manufacturing in Ireland. These acts pro-

hibited the Scots from selling their goods to anyone but England at prices established by the English. These unjust laws, to a great extent, were responsible for the exodus of the Scotch-Irish to the New World.

Most of the emigrants landed at Philadelphia or Charleston, South Carolina. The Carolinas seem to have been preferred over the more northern areas. In Pennsylvania they ran head-long into the fanaticism of Quakers who had already claimed most of the good farming lands. From there, like many others before them, they turned south to less populous areas. Some stopped off in the Shenendoah Valley of Virginia, while others continued into North Carolina where they met up with the Scotch-Irish who had landed at Charleston. Both groups moved north and west into the upland counties of the Carolinas.

The first battle of the American Revolution was actually fought in Alamance County, North Carolina by a group of Scotch-Irish who called themselves the "Regulators." They were defeated by Colonel William Tryon, then the Royal Governor of this province, on the banks of Alamance Creek in 1771. Later, some of these same men signed the famous Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence. No less than six of the signers bore the name of Alexander, and a host of others were likewise of Scottish descent.

In 1784, after an agreement with the

Cherokee, Samuel Davidson, with his wife, infant daughter, and a slave, crossed the Swannanoa Gap and built his home on Christian Creek. In settling here he became the first white man to settle west of the Blue Ridge.

It was a custom in those days to turn your horse or cow out to graze at night with a bell attached to the animal's neck so they could be found in the morning. On one such morning he went early to get his horse and followed the sound of the bell all the way to the top of the mountain where he was ambushed and killed by Indians. They had removed the bell from the horse and lured Davidson to their hiding place.

When his wife heard the shots, she divined what had happened. She took her infant daughter and slave and walked sixteen miles to the settlement, to what is now Old Fort. There, a posse was organized which caught the raiding party, killed several of them, and drove the remainder into the hills.

Only a few months after the murder of Davidson, his twin brother, William, with his brother-in-law, John Alexander, together with James and Thomas Alexander, came back over the mountains and founded on Bee Tree Creek what became known in history as the Swannanoa Settlement. This opened the way for additional exploration and settlement of the Blue Ridge Country.

At the close of the Revolutionary War, the

state of North Carolina owed much money to her soldiers which she couldn't pay in cash, so many thousands of acres of land in what is now Tennessee were awarded to those who fought in the War. Thus, the flow of emigrants continued westward until the Scotch-Irish can now be found in every state in the Union.

In 1827, a wagon road, called the Buncombe Turnpike, was completed to the Tennessee line connecting the frontier towns of Knoxville and Nashville to the markets in the South. This became a very popular road for the settlers of the day, as reported in an Asheville paper in 1898, that more than 150,000 hogs annually traveled through Asheville on the way to Southern markets.

It might be interesting to visualize the traffic in the fall after the crops had been gathered. Wagons loaded with barrels of apples, hams, chestnuts, and furs would be followed by the inevitable hound dogs. Droves of pigs and hogs were herded along the road. Heifers and steers were tied to the back of wagons while men in their homespun clothing, frontier jackets, and brogan shoes led them to market.

The Long, Long Trail

Everybody knows him, and all Americans claim him. He was a man who created a legend during his lifetime that is still depicted daily in the news and television. He was a good example of the saying, "Truth is stranger than fiction." He was born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania in 1735 of Scotch-Irish and Welsh parents who brought their three-year-old son in search of more plentiful game and better living conditions.

His last name was Boone, and the trails he carved from the wilderness extend into Florida, both Carolinas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri. Following are some of the less publicized events in the life of this extraordinary man.

He unsuccessfully tried to be a farmer in Yadkin County. He got deeper in debt each year he farmed until age 35. Finally, with nothing to lose, he took off for the forbidden land of "Cain-tuck," as the Indians called it. Kentucky was a land of meadows, flowing with the proverbial milk and honey, and thick with deer and buffalo.

He left behind his wife and a sizeable crop of barefoot children, and with six other hunters,

he headed for the Watauga Settlement which was the western most outpost in what is now Eastern Tennessee. Here was the beginning of the "Warriors Path," a trail known only to the Indians that wound through the rugged mountains across the Cumberland Gap into the "Promised Land."

He came back empty-handed to Carolina in just under two years. The Indians had stolen all his furs and everything else he owned except his trusty rifle, but they had spared his life. Still the experience and knowledge was invaluable. He learned how to live and walk as the Indians did. He learned their customs and gained their respect.

In 1773, six families including his own decided to settle in this territory and began the long, long journey. Along the way, Cherokees ambushed the party, killing several of the men, and captured, tortured, and killed Boone's sixteen-year-old son, sending the whole party back in horror.

Two years later, a Colonel Henderson offered the Cherokees $50,000 worth of trading goods for most of "Caintuck," and the offer was accepted. Boone was chosen as leader of this party, and along with 30 hand-picked axmen, a wagon trail was cleared cross the Cumberland Gap. Here, in the midst of the bluegrass, on a bend of the Kentucky River was founded Boonesborough, which was to be the western-

most outpost for the next twenty years.

It was here that his daughter, Jemima, was kidnapped by the Shawnees and carried deep into the forest. Dan'l and a number of companions followed the trail for two days before a rescue could be attempted. Surrounding the Indian camp, the men took dead aim at the enemy and fired in unison, rescuing the girl unharmed.

Just a few months later, Jemima rushed out of the stockade and dragged her wounded father back into Boonesborough during a seige. The Revolution had started, and though the Cherokees were allies of the Colonists, the English had armed the Shawnee, who were well established in this area, to oppose the settlers.

At one time during this war, Daniel Boone and 26 of his companions were captured by the Shawnees and carried to a camp in Ohio. It was here that he showed his true greatness. He made friends with his captors, talked his enemies out of killing the others, and was adopted by the Chief. When he learned of a planned assault on Boonesborough, he escaped and made his way back to the stockade in time to organize his outnumbered defenders against the Shawnee. Though his defenses were pitifully weak, he out-maneuvered, out-talked, and out-fought the Indians to victory.

To Boone himself, the victory left only a bitter taste. When Kentucky became a state, the sheriffs immediately sold 10,000 acres of

Boone's land for taxes. He had been paid in land for his efforts, but his title to the land was worthless. The land on which his home was located was sold out from under him. Boone was bankrupt. Poorer than when they came to the "Promised Land" and disgusted at this unjust treatment, he went to Virginia. He stayed here for a few years, but his itchy feet wouldn't stay still.

At 70 years of age, Boone took his family to Missouri, which was then under Spanish rule. There, Spanish officials gave him title to 8,500 acres of land. Boone was granted the title of Magistrate and held court underneath an elm tree. During the War of 1812, he volunteered for the Army and was disgusted to be turned down because of his age. He was only 78 years old at the time.

When Missouri became a part of the United States, the title to Boone's land was declared null and void due to his failure to take care of some technicalities. Had it not been for a special act of Congress in 1810 certifying his right to this land, Daniel Boone would have again been kicked out in the cold and left penniless. However, a grateful country finally paid tribute to a great man with words of praise for "the man who had opened the way for millions of his fellowmen" over the long, long trail into the wilderness.

Pioneer Farming

North Carolina has always been noted as a leading agricultural state with more small farms than any other. This is especially true of the Catawba Valley where the rolling topography discouraged large farms for the early settlers. Another reason for the small farms was the policy of the Lord Proprietors and the English Crown of limiting the acreage in land grants to not more than 640 acres per household. Of course, some were able to acquire more land through purchase or special privilege, but for the great majority of early settlers, this was enough for their needs.

The early settlers did not acquire a deed or title to the land chosen, but were issued "patents" or land grants, which permitted them to occupy a certain tract of land, provided they cultivated the soil and paid a "quitrent" to the Crown. Thus, in fact, until the Revolution, the settlers didn't actually own the land, but merely rented it.

Farming in the early days was very primitive. Actually, the Indians were better farmers than most of our ancestors and taught them how to survive. Land was so plentiful that no thought was given to conservation of fertility

of the soil. When a portion of land was no longer productive, the farmer just moved on to another section.

With very few tools to work with, it was a backbreaking job to clear enough land for survival. The smaller trees and underbrush were cut with axes and the smaller stumps removed. Larger trees were merely killed by cutting a ring around the bark and planting crops beneath the dead limbs.

Cultivation was accomplished with hoes, which were also used to chop weeds and new growth away from the crops. The hoes were used to scrape up little mounds of earth called "hills" into which the seed was planted. Even as late as the Civil War, some planters reported their crops by the number of "hills" rather than in acreage, as we do now. This was because plowing was virtually impossible among the stumps and roots left in the soil. Also, hand labor was cheaper and more available than livestock or cash to buy equipment.

Unlike the large plantations in eastern North Carolina or our sister states of the Deep South, the Catawba Valley was an area of small farms. Slavery was never very popular nor profitable in this area, even among the wealthy planters.

Early landowners of note did possess quite a number of slaves, but, contrary to the popular conception of the day, they did not find it a profitable business. Most landowners considered

their slaves members of their own family and refused to sell any of their slaves. As the slave population increased, the landowner ran out of land and work to keep his slaves busy. Still, he was responsible for their welfare and had to see that they were fed and clothed.

Martin's Ghost Still Rides

Excitement has long since died down in the Brindletown area, but for nearly a decade, area folks were part of a gold rush. Brindletown is a small, quiet community about 11 miles southwest of Morganton. One would never know the town existed if it weren't for the name painted on the fire department, but it wasn't always small and quiet. Sam Martin's discovery of gold in 1828 created a bustling town almost overnight as prospectors came to the area by the hundreds.

Sam was a New Englander of Irish descent, and he spent his early life prospecting for gold. He looked for it in South and Central America, but was unsuccessful. In 1828, broke and despondent, he started walking back home.

By the time Martin reached Brindletown, he was in rags. Bark stripped from trees replaced the soles of his shoes. He stopped at the home of a shoemaker, who gave him food and shelter.

While staying with the shoemaker, Martin shared with the family his stories of the faraway places and strange people he had seen. Soon the neighbors began dropping in every evening to hear his tales. After a while, he regained his strength, and with a pair of stout shoes and a

decent set of clothing, he told his hosts that he would be leaving for home the next day.

Martin woke up early the next morning and stood at the door looking down the slope toward Silver Creek. The logs of the cabin were chinked with mud, and Sam detected some golden glints in it. Excited, he called the shoemaker, who told him that the mud had come from the creek.

The two men began panning the sandy bottom of the stream at once, and they found gold with almost every dip and swirl of the pans. At first they tried to keep their discovery a secret, working only at night by the light of a pine torch. Curious neighbors soon found out what they were doing, and the rush was on.

Sam Martin panned for gold for about six months. He was never one to stay in one place very long, so when he figured he had enough to last him for the rest of his life, he decided to leave Brindletown in style.

Martin wore a tailor-made suit, a black hat, and shiny boots. He was driving a new coach pulled by a pair of fine horses, and he carried his gold in his saddlebags. He cracked his whip, yelled goodbye to his friends, and headed up the road towards Morganton, but he never reached his destination.

At least no one remembered seeing Sam Martin. The sight of a man dressed in the latest fashion and driving a fancy rig would certainly have aroused a great deal of comment in that

sleepy little village. He never reached his home in Connecticut either.

Martin's disappearance is a mystery to this day. A lot of people knew of his departure in advance, and folks have speculated that he was waylaid, murdered, and robbed. No trace of Sam or his possessions was ever found.

The old man who first told me the story of Sam Martin said that he heard it when he was a child. He and his family lived near Brindletown. He said that sometimes late on a dark night everything would suddenly get still. The crickets and night birds would hush, and if you listened hard, you could hear the faint clatter of hoofbeats and the creaking of a coach on a rough road to Morganton. Folks believed that it was Sam Martin's ghost still trying to find its way to New England.

Bechtler's Gold

The Brindletown gold rush of 1828 brought hundreds of prospectors to this area. Subsequent strikes were made in Rutherford and McDowell counties. Gold mining soon became the principle industry in this part of the country for more than a decade.

Gold became the main medium of exchange in the area because regular U.S. currency was in scarce supply at the time. The nearest government mint was in Philadelphia, and a shortage of gold there limited the amount of currency issued. It would have been much too dangerous an undertaking to ship the gold to Philadelphia. Consequently, the sight of leather pouches or quills filled with gold was common in the early days of the gold strike.

News of the gold strike quickly reached Europe. In 1820, Christopher Bechtler, a German metallurgist and jeweler, came to Rutherfordton with his two sons and a nephew. Here he opened a jewelry store and sold clocks, watches, and numerous other gold items. Bechtler offered to mint gold coins for the government, and this soon became his main occupation.

Between 1830 and 1840, Bechtler struck nearly two and a quarter million dollars in

gold coins using presses and dies he designed himself. They were all in $5, $2.50, or $1 denominations.

Bechtler's coins contained at least as much gold as those coins that were minted in the U.S. Treasury. Some coins of the same denomination differed in size, as Bechtler allowed for impurities in the gold.

After Bechtler's death, his sons, Augustus and Christopher, carried on their father's tradition for a while. The Government established a regional mint in Charlotte, and the Bechtlers retired from minting gold coins. They remain distinguished in our nation's history as being the only private citizens ever to coin gold with government permission.

The Ridge Where Jonas Froze

Choosing the name for a town may seem like a difficult task today. In earlier days, this job was left up to community members who simplified the job greatly. Most town names were derived from local landmarks, first settlers, or community leaders. It was not uncommon for a town to change names as often as new officials took office or local attractions became popular.

The town of Drexel was originally known as Baker. This village sprang up around the saw mill built by Samuel Huffman and D.B. Mull in 1899. As the town grew, it became necessary to officially name it, so Huffman and Mull asked the local railroad superintendent for suggestions. Among the names suggested was Drexel, a famous family from Pennsylvania who owned a majority of the railroad stock. The name stuck and this small town six miles east of Morganton is still known as Drexel.

Morganton's name has its own history. First called Alder Springs, this town was not renamed until after the Revolutionary War. General Daniel Morgan, a Revolutionary hero, was honored when the town was named Morgansborough. Later, it was shortened to its

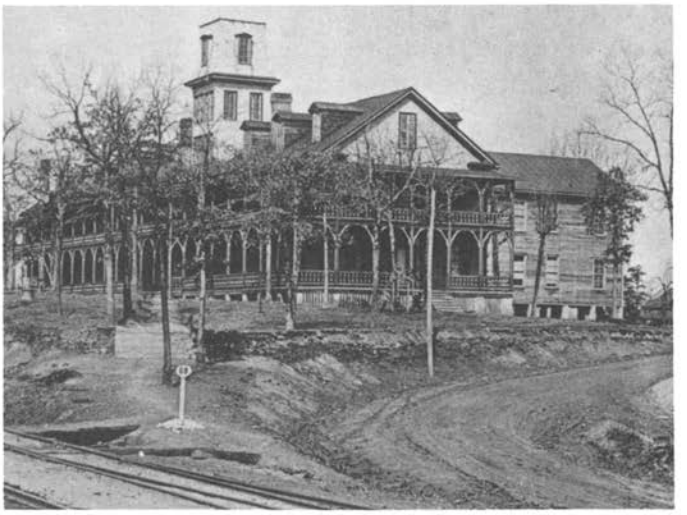
present day Morganton.

Few people would recognize Turkeytail or Sigmundsburg as former titles for Glen Alpine. A nearby tree whose shape resembled a turkey's tail was the basis for the town's first name. Later, two brothers named Sigmund established a store and post office and changed the name to Sigmundsburg. The name Glen Alpine became a permanent one when the Glen Alpine Springs Hotel became so popular that people often used Sigmundsburg and Glen Alpine interchangeably.

The history of Connelly Springs is similar to that of Glen Alpine. Originally called Icard with a post office named Happy Home, this town took its current name from the once prosperous Connelly Springs Hotel.

Chesterfield's past and present names were derived from local postmasters. J.C. Hood headed the town's mail service for a number of years. Therefore, the post office was called Hoodsville until John Chester became postmaster and secured permission to change the name to Chesterfield.

Rutherfordton is the namesake of John Rutherford, a wealthy landowner from the Bridgewater community. He donated the money for purchase of 200 acres of land to establish a college. Robert L. Abernathy, a noted educator, minister, lecturer, and founder of Rutherford College, named the college and



Connelly Springs Hotel

GLEN ALPINE SPRINGS, N. C., JUNE, 1882.

DEAR SIR:

I take the liberty of informing you that this delightful summer resort is now opened for the reception of guests. I pledge myself to spare no pains-taking to add to the comfort and pleasure of all who may patronize me.

The remarkable curative properties of the water, the salubrious atmosphere and the unsurpassed beauty of the surroundings, will be endorsed by all who have visited the Springs. Hotel 1800 feet above sea level.

Board Per Day, $2.00;
" " Week, $8.00 to $10.00, according to location of room;
" " Month, $20.00 to $25.00, " " " " "
Special Terms with Families.

Buy tickets for Morganton, where Coaches will meet trains.

Respectfully,

JOHN H. PEARSON, PROPRIETOR.

Early hotel advertisement

community after its benefactor.

Jonas Ridge received its name from a tragic occurrence. A man by the name of Jonas froze to death while on a hunting trip, and the area was first referred to as the ridge where Jonas froze. It was quite natural to put the ridge together with Jonas for the name, Jonas Ridge.

Hildebran had its beginning when a saw mill and country store were set up near the railroad station. Five years later the store passed into the hands of Jack Hildebrand from whom the place took its name.

In 1893, the followers of the Italian religious leader Peter Waldo began a colony in Western North Carolina. Here, they realized their goal of attaining religious freedom. Valdese, the name chosen by Waldo's followers as the name of their colony, is the Italian name for Waldensian.

As you can see, many towns were named by the postmaster in honor of themselves. Others were named for happenings, products, or just descriptions of the locations. In early times if you mentioned Adakoa, Brindletown, Joy, Worry, Table Rock, Gold, Arney's Crossroad, Henderson's Mill, or Walker's Knob, everyone knew exactly where you meant.

Courthouse Chaos

As a boy, I would climb the winding stairs to the courtroom and watch the great legal minds of that day represent their clients with skill, dedication, and a complete mastery of their profession. Those are fond recollections for me, but the old courthouse harbors many more.

In the early 1800's, court proceedings were not only a time for legal issues, but also a major social event for the people of the area. An 1824 act of the North Carolina State Legislature decreed that a term of the State Supreme Court be held in Morganton in August of each year. Appeals from Rowan and Mecklenburg counties and all counties west of those two were to be heard during these sessions. This became the top event of the year for all Western North Carolina since the most outstanding lawyers, judges, and court officials of the state gathered here for the court sessions.

The Chief Justice and his associates and other officers of the court came in big, red, Concord coaches drawn by teams of either four or six horses. The driver, sitting on his high top seat, always blew his long horn with a tune called "Apple Dumplings for Supper" as he approached town. It is said that when the horn



Burke County Courthouse

blew, it was like the "pied piper" to all the little boys in town.

While court was in session, all the local hotels, boarding houses, and private rooms were filled. Wealthy tourists came in their own private carriages or on horseback with their servants. This was the season for parties and dances all over the county. Often people came to spend the night and stayed to dance a week.

One of the most intriguing incidents witnessed in the courtroom occurred in the fall of 1851

and involved lawyers William Waightsill Avery and Sam Fleming. Avery, a Burke County native, was defending a client from McDowell County against his legal opponent, Fleming, who was from Yancey County.

Fleming became incensed at Avery's vigorous advocacy in a case which involved a guardianship. After court had adjourned, Fleming confronted Avery on the street and challenged him to a fist fight. Avery refused. Fleming then drew from under his coat a cowhide whip and began beating Avery severely. Avery's efforts to protect himself with his fists against a whip of this nature were useless. He was left bloody and wounded on the street until a friend rendered him aid.

This incident left Avery with a horrible dilemma. Under the moral code of the day, he must either destroy himself or his opponent. Avery was advised by friends and family members that he must kill Fleming to uphold his own honor.

Avery did not act upon the matter until court convened several weeks later. The first day of court passed without incident. The next day Fleming entered the courtroom and was speaking to a friend. Avery, who sat only a few feet away, stood up, took two steps forward, pulled a pistol from his coat, and shot Fleming in the heart. He then threw his empty pistol at the body of his fallen rival.

This event took place in the presence of the judge, sheriff, court officers, a number of lawyers, and all the spectators in the crowded courtroom. The defendant, Avery, was jailed for three days. On the fourth day, a jury was selected and empaneled. When the trial began, the prosecution based its case on "prima facie" evidence. The assertion of the defense was that the indignity heaped on the accused by Fleming had calculated to disgrace, degrade, and ruin Avery.

On the fifth day following the shooting, all the evidence had been presented by the prosecution and defense. The judge charged Avery with murder and dismissed the jury to debate Avery's guilt or innocence. The jury deliberated for only ten minutes and returned a verdict of "not guilty." This decision of the jury was based on the fact that Avery was a highly respected man, and he was thought to be merely defending his honor, an asset greatly prized in those days.

Exciting people and trials are not the only significant events to compose the courthouse's colorful history. The building itself is something of a structural marvel. Its solid construction of native stone blocks accounts for its standing today.

As the end of the Civil War was nearing, the Union Army's General Alvan Gillem led a raid through the Catawba River Valley. Gillem's men moved into Morganton and set up head-

quarters in the courthouse. They then entered every house in Morganton and looted, stole, or destroyed everything of value.

When Gillem and his men moved on, they tried to destroy the courthouse by fire. The building's solid stone construction defied their destructive intent. The records housed in the courthouse were destroyed instead as a calling card of the Union Army. That senseless act of vandalism served no military purpose and in later years became a headache for lawyers and a heartache for historians.

Hatching a Dream

Just before the turn of the century, two brothers had a dream, a vision, an inspired ambition. A dream that was born in the heart of the Appalachian Mountain region, not only from real necessity, but also from a great yearning of the people in the rugged mountain country. This need and desire was for the education and self-improvement of a people who had been bypassed by civilization and were living many years behind the time. They wanted to be able to read and to write, to speak so others could understand them, and to get in the mainstream of life.

The problem was that few among these thousands of mountain folk were capable of teaching others. The need for teachers inspired brothers B.B. and D.D. Dougherty of Boone, North Carolina to set out on a crusade of "teaching teachers." Their first venture was called Watauga Academy, the antecedent of what is now Appalachian State University, with hundreds of students graduating yearly into the teaching profession.

I attended Appalachian Training School, as it was called in 1927, when Dr. Blan B. Dougherty was president and his brother,

Dolph, was business manager. During my four years there, I came to know Dr. Blan Dougherty pretty well. In appearance, he was slender, dark complected, nearly bald, save the rim of coal black hair surrounding his crown, sported a little black mustache, and seemed to be very grim-faced and straight-laced. This appearance of grimness, I always thought, was to cover up his native sense of humor in order to lend a look of dignity to his dedicated cause.

A tale I once heard about Dr. Blan concerns one of his "walking spells." Dr. Blan liked to walk. When he had a problem on his mind, he would stroll through the woods or over the campus, hands clasped behind his back, his head bent forward. During these "thinking" spells, which were generally at night, he hardly knew where he was and would walk for miles until his problem was finally solved.

One night he was startled out of his reverie by a keen "whistle" that seemed to come from over behind the girls dormitory. His curiosity exceeding his mental problem of the moment, he quietly obtained a vantage spot behind a tree where he could see what was taking place. Shortly, a window opened on the second story of the old building, and a bed sheet dropped down nearly to the ground. A young man slipped from the shadows, grasped the sheet and was hoisted rapidly through the window. After some little time, the sheet and boy appeared again, and the



B.B. Dougherty 1870-1857



D.D. Dougherty 1869-1929



Watauga Academy in 1905

night visitor slipped quietly off into the darkness.

Rather than raise a fuss to catch the boy, the good professor decided to see who was operating the bed sheet elevator and for what purpose. When he gave a low whistle, sure enough, down came the sheet. Grasping it like the one before, he was hauled rapidly upward until his head was even with the window sill. Upon seeing at close hand the kind of "fish" they had caught, the girls, with a shriek, turned loose the sheet, and our hero fell to the ground and sustained a broken collar bone. The next morning, two girls from the dorm were missing. They had unaccountably become ill during the night and had gone home.

Over the years, little Watauga Academy grew in size and stature, due in great measure to those two men. Today, with University status, the total enrollment is about 10,000, including 1,000 graduate students. Many qualified teachers from this institution have helped improve the educational standards all over the country.

During this same period, another dream was being "hatched." Born of the same need and desperate desire for improvement, a couple from Davidson, North Carolina, Doctors Mary and Eustace Sloop, began in a small way to improve the standards of living through education of the mountain people who were avid for the

opportunity.

Starting from "scratch," the two doctors were finally able to establish a small school at Crossnore, North Carolina. Today the school has a campus of 75 acres and an enrollment of 74 children who are housed in one of eight dormitories. Most of these children come from broken homes. All of this was accomplished through the "boot strap" efforts of local residents under the leadership of this wonderful couple.



Rag shaking at Crossnore

One of the prime sources of income at this school is what is known locally as the "rag shaking." This takes place in a small warehouse or store building where gifts, mostly of second hand clothing, furniture, costume jewelry,

books, etc., are sorted and sold to the public. The merchandise of every imaginable description is donated by individuals and civic organizations throughout the country and has a dual purpose. It provides income through cash sales for the school, and supplies inexpensive clothing for the local people.

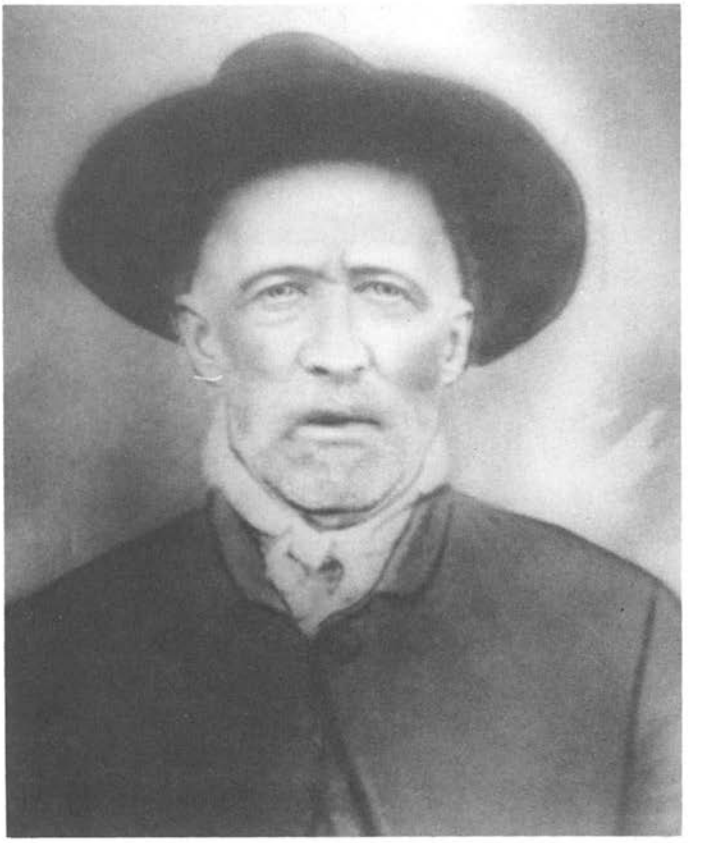
Fate Lane

In days gone by, moonshiners were a dime a dozen, but the moonshiner who paid tax on the spirits he produced was one of a kind. The man to whom I refer was Lafayette (Fate) Lane, and paying the required manufacturer's tax on his corn whiskey and apple brandy was only one of his many distinguishing characteristics.

Fate Lane was a legend in his own time in Western North Carolina. Born to Irish immigrant parents in 1813, Fate lived to be 99 years old. During the course of his colorful life, he was married to eight different wives and sired 43 children. In addition, it was common knowledge in the community that children by other women bore the Fate Lane stamp.

Fate made literally thousands of gallons of apple brandy from the fruit grown in his own large, well-kept orchard. Being a scrupulously honest man, he paid the required tax on every gallon of spirits that he ever distilled. Fate consumed a great deal of the products of his distilleries, but at 99, he proved that liquor in large quantities and women in great numbers were not necessarily detrimental to a man's health.

A great many stories have been told about



Fate Lane 1813-1912

Lafayette Lane. This one is almost beyond belief. Back around 1875 there was a bawdy house in downtown Morganton which presented a problem for the local police. Fate and the officers were on good terms, and when they asked him to do them a favor, he agreed.

They asked him if he and his boys, on their next visit to town, would empty the house of its residents and burn it.

True to his word, on their next trip to Morganton, Fate and his sons escorted the ladies from the house and burned it to the ground. To Lafayette Lane, with eight wives at home, it seemed incredible that any man in his right mind would pay for the services provided in a bordello.

Fate's action at the bawdy house did not meet with the approval of all the local officers of the law, and a warrant charging him with arson was served on him. The Superior Court jury returned a verdict of guilty, and the judge asked Fate to stand and be sentenced. Instead, the convicted man approached the bench and pulled a large iron weight from his pocket. He struck the judge on the head with the weight, knocking his Honor, sprawling and semi-conscious, to the floor. Fate then rode home, disregarding pleas of lawmen to return and take his medicine.

Fate Lane was never sentenced in the arson case, and no warrant was ever served on him for assaulting the judge.

Lafayette Lane was a patriotic man, and he used to come to Morganton on the Fourth of July for the celebration that took place on that date every year. Once he loaded his wagon on July 3rd, placing thereon two 50-gallon barrels,

one filled with whiskey and the other with apple brandy. The spirits were to refresh himself and his sons and any thirsty Morgantonians who might care for a dram or two. Fate and his kin folks camped that night near Salem and went into town early the next morning.

By mid-afternoon, some of the Lanes were becoming pretty obstreperous, and the chief of police told Fate that it appeared that he and his fellow officers might have to lock them up. Fate replied that the Lanes had the police greatly outnumbered and outgunned and asked them to get off the street for a short time. The police did, and Fate gathered his party together and left for home, thereby avoiding a battle that might have resulted in the untimely demise of the entire Morganton police force.

Politically the Lanes were staunch Democrats, and their precinct, Silver Creek No. 2, always voted unaminously Democratic. This result was obtained when, on the eve of election day, all the Lane men old enough to bear arms would come down from the mountains and spend the night at the polling place. On election day, men coming to vote would find the polling place guarded by a platoon of Lanes, armed to the teeth, and only those known to be Democrats were permitted to vote.

Fate could neither read nor write, but being a well-to-do man, he subscribed to three newspapers. His more literate wives read the

news to him, and it is said that he never forgot an important news item.

During the 19th century, the Lane clan ruled the southwestern part of Burke County as though it was their own tiny mountain kingdom, making their own rules of conduct. They had only contempt for those state laws that they disagreed with. Bigamy was not illegal to the clansmen provided that the parties to the relationship were agreeable. If a man was offended and responded with violence, this was the accepted norm.

According to written and verbal history, no law enforcement officers ever came to Brindletown to arrest a Lane, although their illegal and scandalous conduct would have warranted such time and time again.

In the 1930's a political speech writer coined the term "rugged individualism." He must have had Fate Lane in mind.

Overmountain Men

A while back the newspapers told the story of a celebration that took place in Massachusetts commemorating a skirmish that occurred on a bridge on April 19, 1775. The day is remembered as the beginning of a fratricidal war that ended in the freedom of the colonies from the rule of a tyrant. The end came at Yorktown, Virginia exactly eight years from the day the war began.

It's fine to celebrate the start of the American Revolution, but I have often wondered why we people of the mountains of Tennessee, Virginia, and North Carolina, together with those in the Piedmont area directly to the south of the mountains, do not celebrate October 7 each year. This is the anniversary of the Battle of Kings Mountain, credited by many historians as being the turning point in the war.

In 1976, many of the descendants of the men who fought in this battle, together with others interested in the history of our nation, marched down a route that a troop of fine light cavalry took to the South Carolina battlefield. Their journey took them from the Sycamore Shoals of the Watauga River down through the high Ap-

palachians to the Catawba River Valley, and on south through Rutherford County into King's Mountain.

Let's take a few minutes to put Kings Mountain in perspective. Early in September, 1780, the cause of freedom for the Colonies seemed doomed. A few weeks earlier, General Washington had written in his diary "Hope is now all but lost." His army was low on food, clothing, arms ammunition, men, and morale.

Desertions were a common, almost daily occurence. The troops were paid with paper currency issued by the Continental Congress, and it "was not worth a continental." For those who wanted freedom, it was the nadir of the war. From a territorial standpoint, the war was fought in two parts: the first half in the North, and the second and most decisive phase was fought in the South.

In the late summer of 1780, the Southern states were virtually controlled by the British and their Loyalist or Tory allies. The commanding general, Lord Cornwallis, had his headquarters in Charlotte. The principal ports, Savannah and Charleston, had fallen to his troops. The only opposition rested in small bands of Whigs fighting with hit-and-run tactics, unable to mount a sustained attack or even defend a town.

Cornwallis had as his two principal subordinate officers Colonel Benastre Tarleton and

Major Patrick Ferguson, both able and experienced military leaders. This story concerns only Ferguson, 36 years old at the time.

Ferguson was the son of a Scottish lord and was commissioned in the Royal North British Dragoons when only fifteen. The young officer had fought with distinction in the British campaign in Flanders and Germany. In 1768, he was made a captain, and he helped put down a rebellion on St. Vincent Island, a British possession in the Caribbean, and was then recalled to England.

Early in 1777, Ferguson was sent to the Colonies to aid in suppressing the King's rebellious subjects. Here, he served with distinction in the northern phase of the war at Brandywine, Egg Harbor, and Mommouth.

In October, 1779, Ferguson was commisioned Major Commanding in charge of the Second Battalion of the Seventy-First Regiment. His outfit was better known as the Highland Light Infantry because many of his men were descendants of Scotch Highlanders. Ironically, a troop of Lowland Scots finally brought him down.

Ferguson and his regiment, mostly natives of North and South Carolina, were posted at Gilbert Town, North Carolina in September, 1780. Around the middle of that month, he marched north to a point near Morganton, then turned west for some thirty miles before returning to his post.

Somewhere along the line of march, Ferguson paroled a Whig prisoner captured earlier at the Battle of Cowpens. He instructed the prisoner to go over the mountains to the leaders of the Whig militia based in East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia to bear this message: "Either they lay down their arms or he would cross the mountains and hang the Whig leaders and lay waste the land with fire and sword."

The parolee took this message directly to Colonel Isaac Shelby, commander of the militia in Sullivan County, Tennessee. Two days later, Shelby relayed the message to Colonel John Sevier of the Jonesboro, Tennessee militia.

Colonels Shelby and Sevier dispatched a courier to Colonel William Campbell of nearby Washington County, Virginia. These three militia leaders, together with Colonel Charles McDowell of Quaker Meadows and Colonel Andrew Hampton of Rutherford County, held a meeting to decide upon immediate military strategy.

This group of five colonels decided that half of their total militia forces would be mustered to fight Ferguson. The remainder of the men were left to preserve peace at home.

On September 26, 1780, this band of "Over the Mountain Men," or "Buckwater Men," as Ferguson referred to them, left from Sycamore Shoals on the Watauga River. The avowed pur-

pose of this group was to hunt down and destroy Major Patrick Ferguson and his Tory band.

Their path led them through some of the most rugged terrain ever traversed by cavalry, the Southern Appalachian highlands. Crude trails called "traces" were followed through the primitive wilderness of the Yellow, the Roan, the Silver, and the Linville mountains. Two men deserted the second night on the trail while the group was camped between the Roan and Yellow Mountains.

The two defectors hurried ahead to inform Ferguson of the Whigs' presence and purpose. This move had been anticipated by the militia leaders, so that day they divided into two bands. One group headed west, following the north fork of the Catawba River, and the other group followed Paddy's Creek to the Catawba River. The bands converged at Colonel McDowell's home, Quaker Meadows, on the banks of the Catawba River.

Colonel Benjamin Cleveland, commander of the militia in the Surry/Stokes County area of North Carolina had been notified of the plan to battle Ferguson. His troops arrived at Quaker Meadows about the same time as the "Over the Mountain Men." On October 1, this larger militia resumed their search and pursuit of Ferguson.

The two deserters had reached Ferguson at Gilbert Town on September 30, and they in-

formed him of his peril. The British Commander immediately took two steps to ward off the impending attack by the militia:

First, he dispatched two couriers to Cornwallis in Charlotte. Ferguson's urgent request was for "three or four hundred good soldiers, part dragoon," and gave his intended line of march to his destination, King's Mountain.

Ferguson's second action was an attempt to recruit more Loyalists. He wrote a letter and had it posted along the route of his intended march. The letter went as follows:

Denard's Ford, Broad River
Tryon County, October 1, 1780

Gentlemen:

Unless you wish to be eat up by an inundation of barbarians, who have begun by murdering an unarmed son before the aged father, and afterwards lopped off his arms, and who by their shocking cruelties and irregularities give the best proof of their cowardice and want of discipline; I say, if you wish to be pinioned, robbed and murdered, and see your wives and daughters in four days, abused by the dregs of mankind—in short, if you wish or deserve to live, grasp your arms in a moment and run to camp.

The Back Water men have crossed the mountain; McDowell, Hampton, Shelby and Cleveland are at their head, so that you know what you have to depend upon. If you choose to be degraded forever and ever be a set of Mongrels, say so at once, and let your women turn their backs upon you, and look out for real men to protect them.

Pat. Ferguson, Major 71st Regiment

Having taken these means of getting reinforcements, Ferguson now marched directly south for a few miles, and then turned southeast. Crossing the South Carolina border east of Gaffney in Cherokee County, he pro-

ceeded to his chosen position of the bald, rocky top of the low mountain, which was densely covered on all its sides by trees. Here he waited for reinforcements from his request to Cornwallis.

Ferguson waited in vain for his messengers had been late in delivering his request to Cornwallis. After having been dispatched by Ferguson, the messengers spent the first night of their trip with a staunch Whig and pretended to believe in the cause of freedom. The messengers aroused the Whig's suspicions by leaving in a great hurry very early the next morning. He gathered a few friends to pursue Ferguson's messengers. When the messengers became aware that they were being followed, they hid out for a short while and finally reached Cornwallis in Charlotte on October 7, the day the battle began.

Ferguson's dogged pursuers had taken a slightly longer route to King's Mountain. They had stayed to the west and then south of their quarry, keeping the waters of the Silver and Cane creeks between them to avoid possible ambush. On October 7, they reached the mountain and quickly surrounded it.

Preparing for battle, each commander spoke to his troops. Colonel Campbell, immediately before leading his Virginians up the steep, wooded incline, is said to have yelled, "Here they are, my brave boys, shout like Hell and

fight like devils."

Then came the final order for all from Benjamin Cleveland, his Scottish claymore in hand, "Fresh prime your guns and every man go into battle resolving to fight until he dies."

Thus, a force of slightly more than 900 men began climbing the steep sides of the mountain, darting from tree to tree, all the time screaming like madmen. Ferguson's troops, by best estimates, numbered about 1,100 men.

The Loyalist forces, exposed on the summit, were easy targets for the backwoods marksmen, who themselves had good cover in the trees. At the summit the fighting was fierce, hand-to-hand, but gradually the tide turned for the Whigs.

In desperation, Ferguson, on horseback, accompanied by two of his officers, tried to break through the tightening circle. Ferguson was mortally wounded in his attempt, and he died immediately after falling from his mount.

The Tories now attempted to surrender, one by one, by tying white cloths to their gun barrels. The meaning of their sign was ignored by the Whigs either because they did not understand the intent of the Tories or they were obsessed by hatred. Nevertheless, the slaughter continued for a time before hostilities ceased.

The entire battle lasted less than one hour.

Major Patrick Ferguson died a hero's death. Two horses had been shot from under him and

his sword was broken in the battle. His body, pitted with eight bullet holes, was wrapped in a beef hide and buried on the mountain.

The killing did not end on the battlefield. Some forty Tory prisoners were given summary trials by their captors and sentenced to hang at Biggerstaff's farm above Gilbert Town as the mountain men started for home. Nine were hanged before the fires of vengeance cooled, and the rest were spared.

Weeks after the battle, British military leaders in the South were still at a loss as to where this fierce and formidable army had come from. George Washington did not know of this army's existence or purpose until after the battle of King's Mountain had been fought.

The war was to go on until April 19, 1783. Beseiged at Yorktown and prevented from escaping by sea by the French fleet, Cornwallis delivered his sword to George Washington, thus ending the Patriots long struggle for freedom.

The Generation Gap

We hear so much about the generation gap that I have gone back just one generation to try to depict the life and times of that earlier era. Let's look back and see what a typical medium-sized town was like in 1905.

Most growing towns of this period had a water system, telephones, electricity, town government, and a fire department of sorts. The fire department probably consisted of two reel teams with voluntary firemen who could man those outfits upon call. The reels were hand-operated with two big wagon wheels upon which was wound a hose that would attach to the few water hydrants around the business sections of town.

Inside plumbing was just becoming popular for those who could afford it, although the majority of homes still used the outside privy. Many thought it unsanitary to move the privy inside the house and only had a cold water spigot in the kitchen which invaribly froze every winter.

Housing costs then were unbelievable when compared with today's soaring prices. My father's house was built during this time and cost a total of $2,300. It was a two-story frame



Downtown Morganton at the turn of the century



Open-air markets were the fashion

house consisting of eight rooms. Every room had a fireplace in it except the kitchen, which housed a Majestic wood stove where all the cooking was done.

Public schools had only recently been started, and it was not unusual for classes to be held in the Town Hall or in local churches. In addition to the public schools, there were a number of private schools which were held in the homes of the teachers.

Transportation was by foot, horseback, buggy, or wagon. Livery stables, where horses would be boarded or rented, were profitable businesses. Horse and mule traders were the equivalent of car salesmen today and had horse lots, barns, and blacksmith shops within the town limits.

All country people and most town folks had a cow, chickens, and a pig in their back yard. There were no refrigerators, so meat in the summertime had to be consumed before it spoiled. Fall was hog killing time when the meat was processed into cured hams, liver mush, souse meat, bacon, fat back, and spare ribs. Vegetable gardens were essential, and everyone tried to can and preserve enough during the summer to last through the winter.

The centers of activity at that time were the Town Hall, Court House, and Depot. Folks would gather at the Depot to watch the trains run and the drummers get off and on. Hacks

representing the different boarding houses and hotels met each train.

The barrooms, which were on almost every corner and in between, were really crowded during court week. Everybody came to town then in their wagons, buggies, and on foot, and camped out on vacant lots. There, they would swap horses, drink, sing, drink, tell tales, drink, and, in general, catch up on all the news and gossip.

Things that were commonplace then are now either gone for good or fast disappearing from the streets and stores. Typical things were barefoot boys, hound dogs, tobacco juice, muddy streets, buggy whips, pickle and cracker barrels, horse collars, corsets, hat pins, watering troughs, hitching posts, horse manure on the streets, grindstones, washboards, and high button shoes.

In just one generation, we have gone from the Wright's flight at Kitty Hawk to a man on the moon; from horse and buggy to sport cars and motor bikes; from muddy roads and ferries to super highways and jumbo jets; from a weekly, two-page newspaper to instant news on television; from a water wheel on the creek to atomic power. Does anyone want to go back?

Sun to Sun

The old addage, "A man works from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done" was never more true than when applied to the country women of yesteryear. Today, when "store bought" items are the rule rather than the exception, when we rely on newspapers, radio, and television for news, and when education is deemed a right, and not a privilege for the moneyed few, it is difficult to recall the lifestyle of our country people not so very long ago.

Let's look back one hundred years or so and see what a typical day was like for a country woman. We'll just see what Ma's doing while Pa is breaking his back sitting on a log in the woods all day, waiting for a chance deer or turkey to wander by.

First, Ma gets up before daylight to stir up the fire, and puts away the spinning wheel or sewing she worked with 'til late the night before. Next, she goes to the smoke house to cut a slab of bacon off the side meat for breakfast for her man and eleven children. On the way back to the house she 'totes in a load of wood for the fire and puts the pots and pans on the hearth to heat while she goes to the spring for a bucket of water. When she gets back, it's time to wake

the old man who gets up grumbling about his back and complaining of these dang females who wake a man in the middle of the night.

While Ma stirs up some vittles, changes the baby, wakes and dresses the other children, reminds Pa to wash his face and feed the mule, she chunks the fire, empties the slop jars and chamber pots, reminds Billy to wash his ears, finds a hair ribbon for Susie, and lines up the caps for the boys and bonnets for the girls. All this is done while the bacon is sizzling.

It is now time to start the day's work. She remembers that this is wash day and soap must be made, peach tree bark gathered to "sweeten" the clothes, butter to churn, the cow to feed and milk, eggs to gather, garden patch to hoe and weed, and try to get Pa to string a new clothes line.

While she's athinkin' of the day's work to come, she's stopped two fights among the young'uns, stirred up a dozen eggs, whipped up a batch of buckwheat batter, raked some ashes aside for the lye to make soap, baked some corn-pone for Pa's six houn' dogs, and shelled four-teen ears of corn for the chickens. Now Pa's back from the barn, complainin' that somebody done moved the string he had saved for the clothesline. Ma reaches over and slaps Billy across the rump, for she saw him use that string on his kite.

By now it's might-nigh daylight, and while

Ma washes the dishes, sweeps off the hearth, carries out the ashes, makes up the beds and runs the "brood" out of the house for some fresh air, Pa is oilin' his rifle so's he can go rabbit huntin'.

The Civil War placed many more demands on country women. We have heard little about the hundreds of thousands of plain, ordinary, country women who stayed at home and performed all the necessary chores previously done by their husbands in addition to their own housework.

According to all accounts, there just weren't enough daylight hours to get all the chores done, so after the children were put to bed, she would go out into the fields and plow the crops by moonlight, or kill the hogs, or cut firewood. She did all these things in addition to encouraging her husband and sons in the army. Supplies and clothing were provided by these country women. Bandages for the wounded were made at home, and if nursing skills were needed, it was the women who provided them.

One might think that the slaves could perform these functions, yet surprisingly more than 75 per cent of the white southerners had no slaves at all. Those who had as many as 20 slaves were exempt from conscription into military service. The same applied to wealthy Northerners who could hire someone to serve their enlistments. As a result, it was the poor farmers

and tradesmen who served as soldiers in the Civil War.

Unquestionably, the monuments on every town square pay tribute to the soldiers who served the Confederacy. By far, the greater sacrifice was by the women who were left at home. In all fairness, alongside the man with the gun should be a woman in her bonnet and shawl, with a plow at one hand, a spinning wheel at the other, and a cradle rocking at her feet.

Buckeyes for Rumatiz

Hill folks pay a lot more attention to the little things and happenings in their lives than city folks. They have learned over the years from their parents and their own observations that the little "signs" can save a lot of grief, maybe even one's life.

Many signs and superstitions were brought over from the old country, but a lot were incubated right here in the Carolina foothills.

Farming was a necessary part of livelihood, and an early frost, late spring, rain, snow, or drought had much to do with the success or failure of their crops. With no weather forecasts, they had to depend on signs which indicated when to plant, when to harvest, when cold weather was coming etc. The following are some of the more common signs that a lot of folks believe in to this day.

Weather Signs

A ring around the moon means dry weather. The number of stars within the ring indicates the number of days before rain.

It won't rain under a new moon until the point tilts down.

If a new moon falls on Saturday, look for twenty days of bad weather.

The first frost comes three months after the first katydid is heard.

The amount of mast (acorns and nuts) will tell whether to expect a hard or a mild winter.

Thickness of corn husks or animal fur and the width of a caterpillar's stripe denote the severity of the coming winter.

If the fire sputters or fizzles, look out for bad weather.

There will be as many snows in winter as there were fogs in August.

When duck, geese, and guineas make a fuss, it's a sign of a storm.

Sky red in the morning - a sailor's warning.
Sky red at night - a sailor's delight.

Folks who can see Grandfather Mountain say he's a pretty good weather prophet. If he has his hat on (a cloud around the peak), look out for bad weather. If he's smiling (clear), you can expect ten days of good weather.

Social and Miscellaneous Signs and Superstitions

A buckeye carried in the hip-pocket wards off rheumatism.

If you drop your fork on the floor, your love life is in trouble.

Sweeping under the feet of a girl when she's sitting down will guarantee she will be an old maid.

A thunderstorm will sour milk.

When a fire in the fireplace roars up the chimney, there will be a fuss in the family.

If your wedding day is windy, it's a sign of good luck.

If your second toe is bigger than your "big" toe, you'll be the boss in your family.

If you sneeze before breakfast, you'll have company that day.

If a fisherman cusses, fish will not bite.

Corn does best planted when the oak leaves are the size of squirrel ears.

Do you avoid walking under ladders, go in one door and out another, sit against the planks in a card game, "stamp" every white horse or mule you see, go around the same side of a tree or post when walking with a companion? If you do, welcome to the club "old-timer."

Sayin's and Meanin's

I have discovered that when I leave the mountains, I have difficulty getting others to understand what I am trying to say...particularly in the North. Even when I spell it out, they ask me to repeat it. The fact is that they just don't know what good, old, pure English is.

There is some disagreement among scholars regarding the origin of mountain dialect. I am inclined to believe that the people of the Southern Appalachians have retained much of the Old Country speech which was handed down to them in its purest form by their ancestors from olde England. There is too much evidence of the Elizabethean era to ignore, although some expressions are obviously contemporary with Daniel Boone times.

The following are some of the more common words and expressions used in our section of the country:

Air - Frequently used for are or is. "He air a good boy."
Agin - When. "Hit'll be late agin I git through."
Aim - Plan. "I aim to finish plowing 'fore dark."
Arn - Used to press clothes. "My arn got too hot."
Bile - Boil. "Hit looks as iffin this here pot will never bile."
Bar - Bear. "Ole Nim Grey wuz the best bar hunter around."
Cheer - A piece of furniture. "Draw up a cheer and set."
Clum - Past tense of climb. "He clum that tree like a squirrel."
Crick - Creek. "I fell offen the foot log, smack dab in the crick."
Far - Fire.

Fit - Fight. "I gotta help them Forest Rangers fit the far."
Fotch - Past tense of fetch. "Fetch me that jug!" "I fotch one yestiddy."
Fur piece - Long distance. "It's a fur piece to town."
Gully washer - Very hard rain.
Holpe - Help. "You don't holpe me, I'll tell your Pa."
Kivered - Covered. "I'm plumb kivered up with work."
Leave - Let. "You better leave me be."
Mought - Might. "It's mought nigh dinner time."
Nigh - Near or almost.
Quair - Strange or teched. "Ain't he jest a leetle quair?"
Ruint - Spoiled. "The pot tarned over and ruint my beans."
Snuck - Past tense of sneak. "He snuck in the barn."
Seed - Past tense of see. "I seed you when you done it."
Shet - Close. "Shet the door."
Taters - Potatoes.
Vittles - Food. "Weren't for taters and 'lasses, wouldn't be no vittles.
Warnets - Walnuts.
Yander - Yonder.
"He taken sick" - To become ill.
"Get out" - Busy as all get out.
"Weak as pond water" - A sorry drink or weak sermon.
"I'll learn him" - A threat of violence.
"I ain't losing no sleep" - I'm not worried.
"Light and set" - Get off your horse and stay a while.
"How be ye?" - How are you?
"A faultin' woman" - One who nags constantly.
"Git or gitten for get" - "Hits gitten ready fer to snow."

Snake'ing the Kivers

Time moves so rapidly, and customs have changed so drastically in the past century, that many people don't even recognize the names of essential items that were commonplace to their ancestors. A few of the words have been deleted from modern dictionaries because of disuse.

Some of the tools used in construction of the early homes were the adz, froe, auger, and broadaxe. Singletree, hame, backstrap, crupper, or hoke were common names to those fortunate enough to have horses, mules, or oxen. In the house was the indispensible fly brush, trundlebed, loom, flax wheel, bellows, anvil, and maul. Some of the earliest homes didn't have floors, but were built on the ground with pine needles, rushes, or just the bare earth. Later homes had puncheon floors, which were split logs with the flat side turned up.

Poisonous snakes were always a problem for the early settlers. Their log or pole cabins were generally crude affairs with cracks large enough to see daylight on all sides, and snakes could slip in most any place. It became essential for cabin dwellers to "snake" the covers before retiring for bed. This practice involved removing all the bedclothes from the beds and shaking

thoroughly before climbing in for the night.

Early roads in the mountain areas were rough and barely passable. This attributed to the good relationships between neighbors of the region. As one old-timer once said, "The few inhabitants were mostly good because the region was so rough and the roads were so bad that the devil could hardly get through."

Before the county took over the responsibility, the first road systems in the area were kept up by the local men. All males between the ages of 21 and 45 who lived along a section or road were required to donate their labor for several days each year toward keeping the dirt roads passable. They would meet at designated places with their shovels, mattocks, and other tools to fill up the pot holes, open ditches, and grub stumps from the trails.

There were no doctors in the early days and very few midwives or "granny-women" to care for expectant mothers, so everyone learned to makedo with what they had. One custom that was quite prevalent was to "snuff" the wife at birthing time. That was done by putting a pinch of strong snuff in each nostril which would cause violent sneezing and aid in the delivery of the child.

The first settlers in a region ate "high on the hog," as we say down South, since wild game was plentiful and the deer, bear, turkey, etc. provided the main meat rations needed without

much effort. It was not unusual for a good hunter to kill as many as two hundred deer and one hundred bear in a normal life span. However, as the population increased, the supply of game decreased to such an extent that settlers had to resort to smaller animals for food.

Eventually, it became very difficult to kill enough rabbits, squirrels, and other small game to feed the large families of that day, so pigs and other livestock replaced the deer for meat. During this transitional period from wild game to domesticated animals, folks lived pretty hard, learning to eat most anything that moved. Animals that were formerly spurned for food such as turtles, frogs, and possums found their way into the pots of the hungry population.

Most everyone had a spring house which consisted of a little room built around and over the spring with a trough for the cold water to run through. In this trough were placed crocks of milk, butter, fruits, and vegetables to keep cool. An apple house or "tater hole" was necessary to keep these foods through the winter. Hams and meats were cured and stored in smoke houses.

In the early days, cows, pigs, chickens, and turkeys were allowed to run loose and feed on the native mast of the forests and fields. Western ranchers branded their cattle, but in the mountains the livestock generally had their ears notched a certain way to distinguish one

man's stock from another. Some questionable characters would cut the whole ear off for a distinguishing mark. Occasionally, feuds were started by arguments and suspicions about whose calf was whose.

Education was a sort of hit or miss affair. A community was considered lucky if it could secure the services of a teacher who had attended one or two years of college. Classes were first held in homes or churches until little one-room log school houses were built. These school houses generally didn't have fireplaces or any other means of heat, so classes were held only for three months during the summer.

In some sections a two-week "writing" school would be held where, for a small fee, children and adults would be taught to write. Many of the old documents were written with beautiful penmanship, but had very poor spelling and composition.

Stores were few and far between, so "peddlers" roamed the sparsely settled countryside with huge packs on their backs filled with spices, scissors, knives, ribbon, etc. They were always welcomed, fed, and entertained because of the news they brought from other parts of the country. Even though newspapers were printed from the earliest days, there were no reliable delivery methods in the Hill Country until a national system of mail delivery was established. Deliveries then were by horseback, and few of

the inhabitants could afford to buy papers, even if they were able to read.

Today's good roads, electricity, schools, and tourism have made a big change in the foothills. Despite all these changes, the people still retain their simplicity and self-reliance that enabled them to prosper in earlier days.

House Raisings and Parlors

Constructing a home in early mountain times was a major undertaking. It took the efforts of an entire family and help from generous neighbors to build even the most simple log house. Generally, when a community was established, they would have a "house raising" for each family. Everyone would gather from miles around to help "raise" the house.

Clearing the land was the first step taken when building a house. This served a dual purpose since land was needed for both a house and an area where crops could be planted, and the timber was used to cut logs for the house.

The logs that formed the houses were about eight inches thick, 14 to 24 inches wide, and usually 20 to 24 feet long. Dovetailed joints were used to put the logs together. Fourteen inch by fourteen inch plates held in place by wooden hickory pegs one-and-one-half to two inches in diameter secured the dovetailed joints at the top.

The chimneys and fireplaces were constructed of native stone. Red or white clay was used to hold together the stones. Fireplaces were usually five to seven feet wide and four to five feet high. This gave enough room for the



Preserved log cabin

heating and cooking at the same time.

The early houses had no windows, only holes cut the front and back with shutters to cover them. There were no locks of any kind on the doors. Wooden latches operated by strings which could be pulled in at night were the only method of securing the house.

Most log houses had only a kitchen and master bedroom for adults downstairs and a loft upstairs for the children. Some folks had a "parlor," used only when special company or the parson paid a visit. Neighbors and family were entertained in the master bedroom or kitchen by the huge fireplace. Visitors were always welcomed by the mountain people as their social gatherings were limited to "house raisings,"

"corn shuckings," and "quilting bees" in the winters, and the summers were devoted to farming tasks.

Much Obliged

Mountain folks have always been the most polite group of people I have ever known. Unless you know their habits and customs, you would probably think just the opposite. For instance, the man would walk ahead of his wife, sometimes quite a distance, and let her carry the groceries or other packages. In our ignorance we might think that was the height of rudeness, yet his reasons for doing so make him quite chivalrous. He goes ahead to ward off danger to his family. There might have been a hostile Indian, bear, mountain lion, or rattlesnake just around the corner.

Give a family a gift, and you'll receive a "much obliged," and a gift in return. They refuse to be "beholden" to anyone and are very proud and self-sufficient. Even a visit will get a jar of preserves, flowers, canned goods or other tokens of appreciation.

The worst community crime is to steal or tattle on your neighbor. I've heard people criticized more for stealing than for killing. The fact is that in the early days stealing was about the same as murder. When one has worked and slaved for a bare existence and some of that was stolen, a terrible hardship was caused. Since

your neighbors were all in the same circumstances, if you borrowed from them, two families would go hungry instead of one.

In the Old West you could get hanged for stealing a horse. Here, one penalty was to have your ear notched or cut off so the whole world could tell you were a thief. I don't know if this was a legal penalty, but I do know that it was a custom.

Except for the young "dare devils," most mountain folk obey all the rules of the road when driving or walking. They will pull over to let you pass. If you have car trouble, they will invariably stop to help. Day or night they are willing to help a neighbor or stranger in trouble. This trait is part of the mountain "code" handed down from earlier days when a community's motto was "one for all and all for one" or "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours."

I can remember when there would be only one threshing machine in a whole community. When the small grain was ripe, all the men in the neighborhood would gather on each man's farm in turn. The women folks would gather also to cook a "rip snortin" good meal for the men folks.

Earlier, the same cooperation was seen in "house raisings." After a man had cut his logs for a new house, his neighbors would help to build or "raise" the logs for his home.

"Quilting bees," corn shuckings, or sickness

of any kind would invariably bring your neighbors over to help out. Those were the days when the "latch string" was always out. No one locked a door since there was no need to fear your neighbors.

Mountain men are very persistent lovers. They select the gal they want and won't take "no" for an answer. They hold their women in high esteem and will protect their good names with their fists or guns if necessary.

Mountain folks are also very particular about appearances. Should you offer a lone woman a ride home, she will ride in the back seat, even if you know her well. They don't take chances of being "talked about."

Sometimes during the courtship, "the corn is planted before the fence is built." In most instances the couple marry either willingly or at the business end of a shortgun. Occasionally, however, the girl decides that she doesn't like her suitor enough for marriage. In this case the offspring is known as a "woods colt." Most are very frank about this and there is seldom any stigma attached to the child or mother.

This group of mountain manners, along with many others, will not be found in any formal book of etiquette. They are merely part of the code that has been accepted and adhered to through the years by its people.

Coon Huntin'

People the world over are mighty prideful of their huntin' dogs. Mountain folks in North Carolina are no exception. There is just not much of anything a mountain man had "druther" do than take his prized coon dogs huntin'.

Just imagine a cold, clear, fall night, with the moon a'shinin', a light frost in the makin', when the persimmons are good and ripe, a pack of restless dogs a 'whining and straining at the leash', your wife busy packing a few "vittles" to nibble on the way.

Now coons and foxes are about the smartest of the wild animals, and there's always an argument between two groups of hunters as to which is the best huntin'. Personally, I prefer coon to fox. There's more excitement. A fox covers so much territory that you can't follow the hounds like you can coon huntin'.

Listening to a good coon race can be as exciting as a modern day NASCAR Race with Petty, Foyt, and Johnson all battling for first place. Each man knows his own dogs' voices and can even tell by the tone how close he's getting to the quarry. I've seen and heard some mighty good stories on these trips, and some lies and

arguments too. To accuse another man's dog of lyin' (that is, barking at the moon instead of the coon), is a fightin' excuse. People have to be mighty careful when talking of the other fellow's best friend.

One of the best old huntin' stories I've heard contains a moral that is applicable today. It concerns three men: Misters A and B and Colonel C. It seems A and B had a serious "fallin' out" over a piece of worthless land and were not on speaking terms at all. Folks git mighty "riled" up over their land or dogs.

Well, Mr. A went coon huntin' one night and "unbeknoingest" to him, the family pet by the name of Trip had followed the other coon dogs to the woods. Every time the pack would hit a hot trail, little Trip would get excited and run around and around in circles out of pure exuberance. This, of course, got the pack so confused that they would lose the trail. Mr. A called and called "Here Trip! Come on Trip! That's a good pup! Here! Here!" until he was plumb hoarse.

At long last, with his patience pretty exhausted, and his hunt ruin't, Mr. A picked up a pine knot, threw it at the little dog, and unluckily killed him dead as a door nail. Mr. A just sat there looking at Trip and cried, knowing how the children would feel about their pet, until finally a diabolical scheme was hatched in his vindictive mind. Little Trip was just the size of

a nice plump possum, so why not dress him and send him to his mortal enemy, Mr. B.

This would serve two purposes. The first was to get even with Mr. B. The second was that he could tell the kids that Trip had run away. So that's what he did.

Well, it so happened that Mr. B was off on a journey, and Mrs. B didn't want to cook possum for just one person, so she sent it to Colonel C with her compliments.

I imagine you've guessed by now what happened. Colonel C invited Mr. A to dinner. What did they have? Little dog Trip, all fixed up with salt, pork, sweet 'taters, and all the trimmings!

After the meal, Mr. A rared back, picking his teeth, and complimented the good Colonel on a delicious meal. "By the way, Colonel, that's the best possum I've et in many a day. Where'd you catch him?"

When Colonel C informed him of the hospitality of neighbor B, Mr. A turned pale, then green, excused himself hurriedly, ran out the back door, grabbed hold of a sapling tree and started praying, not to the Lord, but to Trip. He said, "Dear Trip, I called you once, twice, and even ten times, and you wouldn't come! Now I call you just once more." And Trip finally came.

The Valley's First Industry

This is not a story of heroes or villians. It is a short tale of a way of life for thousands of mountain people in earlier times.

The first settlers established their homesteads where game was most plentiful, which was generally in the mountain regions. By the time most of the game was depleted, other farmers had already occupied the rich, level, bottom land which left mountain folks with poor, steep, rocky marginal land that a goat could hardly survive on.

Roads were so bad that it was nearly impossible for a poor mountain farmer to get what little corn he could grow to market. A natural process evolved that enabled him to make a living by grinding his corn into meal, running it through a homemade still, and selling the resulting product as corn likker.

To make good corn whiskey, one had to sprout some of the corn until it was just right before grinding. This was done by placing some of the corn in a sack and keeping it sprinkled with water. After the corn was sprouted, it would be ground in a coffee mill which would take many hours. This meal would then be poured into "still beer," which was similar to

cooked corn mush. In three or four days this would ferment into a mash that would be run through a copper distillery.

Most moonshine businesses began as a small family operation that produced only ten to twenty gallons of moonshine per day after weeks of preparation. Later on, as business became more profitable, everyone began making it in larger quantities. Competition was keen since there was a good profit in moonshine; that is, if you didn't get caught. Some family feuds were started over the business.

As blockading operations became big business, making and delivering moonshine became a game—a fierce competitive game between the local and Federal officers and blockaders.

Special cars were equipped to haul the liquor. Most of the blockaders used Ford cars with a Cadillac motor installed and extra springs on the back. A car thus equipped could haul 25 cases of liquor at a time. The driver's duty was to outrun and outguess their adversaries.

The adversaries, federal agents most often referred to as Revenooers, were given the difficult task of catching the culprit at his still. A 30-year veteran federal agent once said that in all his years of chasing blockaders, he had never had his pistol out of his holster. He also said that the most dangerous part of his job was running

into barbed wire fences while trying to catch a man at his still.

Men caught making moonshine seldom had any animosity towards the federal agents. They knew that the agent was just doing his job and that he had just "outsmarted" them.

Enforcement of bootlegging laws was largely left up to local sheriffs during Prohibition. This posed a quite a sensitive and peculiar problem for local law enforcers since the blockaders were quite often friends and neighbors of the sheriff and his deputies, and they realized that they were just trying to make a living for their families.

There was also the matter of politics. Sheriffs were elected by popular vote, and in times past there were so many people involved in the moonshine business that they had quite an impact at election time.

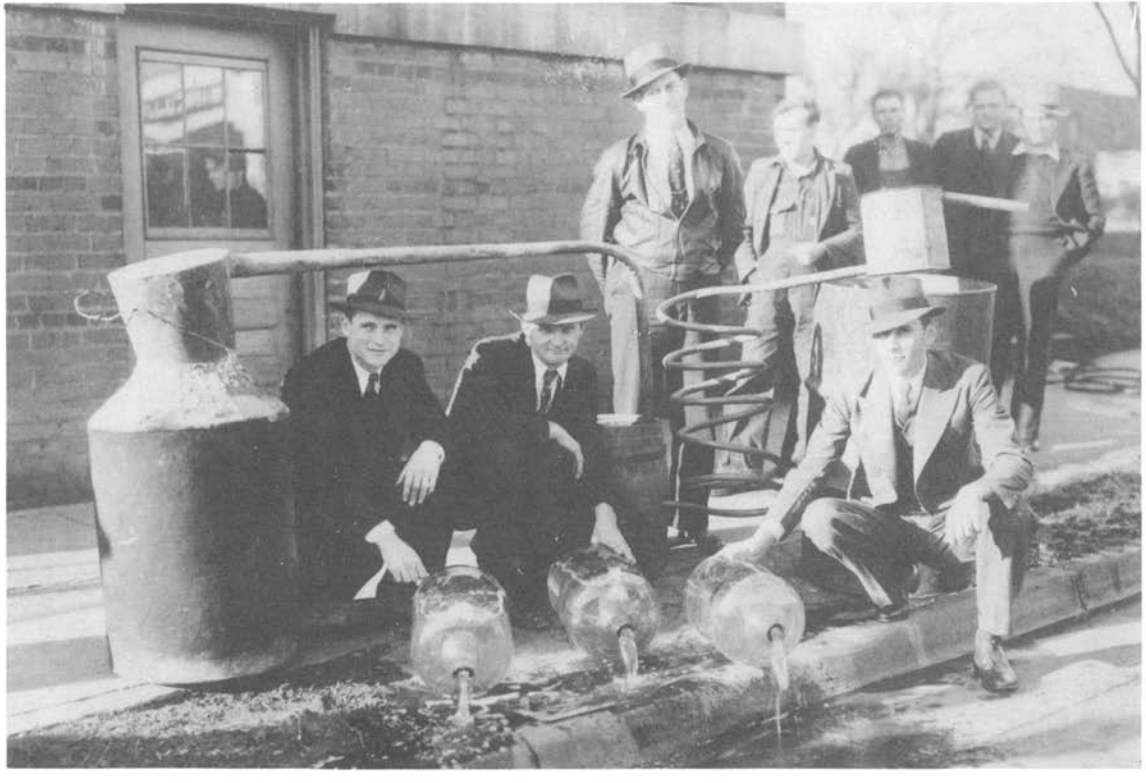
In the first place, many voters wanted to have a convenient source of supply for their own benefit. Then there was the attitude shared by many that voiced, "We don't want nobody from Washington telling us what we can or can't do."

What generally happened was that the blockaders were allowed to operate rather freely until they were reported by some informer. The law then had to act, one way or the other.

Most of the operators had at least one friend among the deputies who would try to get word to them that their still had been reported.



Early valley industry in operation



"Revenooers" pose with moonshine haul

Sometimes a deputy would tell his friend, "I hear you've been farming in the woods." That was warning enough for the blockader to move his still immediately.

Informers came in both sexes and for many different reasons. Jealousy was one reason: "If my still got cut down, I'd see that John's still was caught also." Sometimes a wife, whose husband was drinking too much, would find out where it was coming from and report it to the sheriff. Occasionally, hunters would run across a still, and if they were ardent drys, they would report the location.

Most of the old-timers knew who the moonshiners were and where they were operating. If they needed to replenish their likker supply, they would go to the nearest blockader and say something like this: "Me and Joe and Paul would like to coon hunt a little tonight. Do you know where the best place is? If we see anything, we won't tell."

One coon hunter wasn't quite so wise to the ways of the mountains. He and his companions ran across a still one night, and he made the mistake of telling it around town. A friendly deputy told the operator about it, and the next time that group went "a coon huntin' " and came back to where they had parked their car, they found nothing but a piece of junk.

Blackmail became a lucrative venture for some law enforcement officials. It seems that in

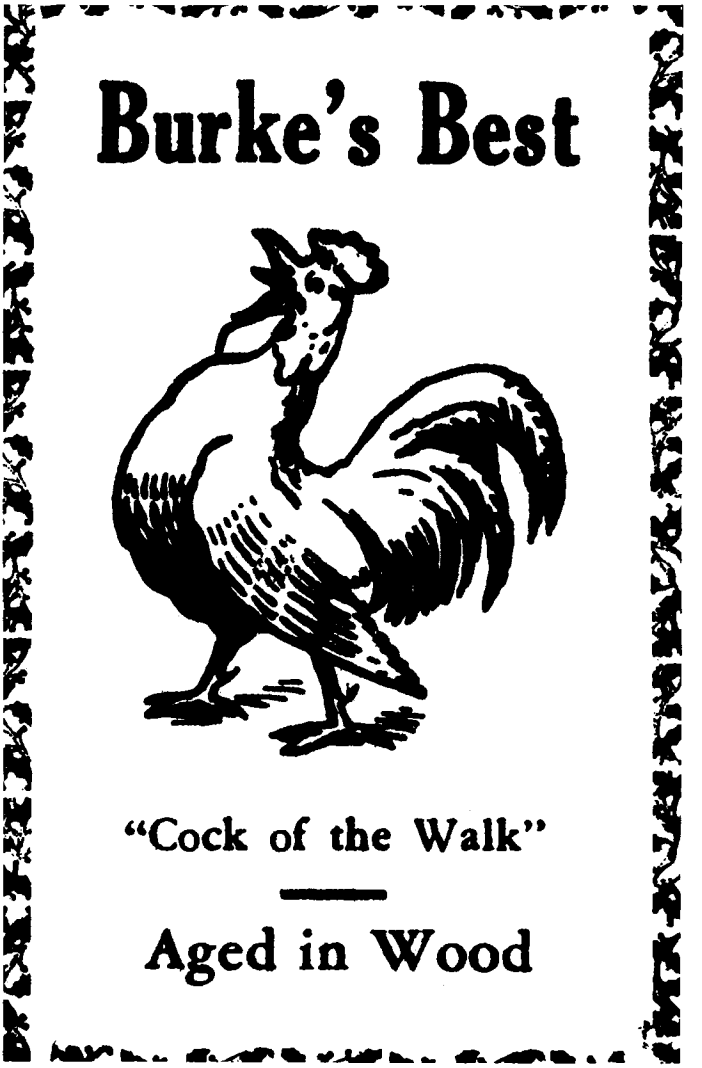
those days retailers of contraband were required to pay some member of the sheriff's department an "insurance" fee. This fee was paid to assure the operator of a still that their establishment wouldn't be raided before sufficient warning was given.

Occasionally, a deputy would become greedy and demand additional "insurance" payments. One operator's refusal to pay a double fee led to the downfall and end to Russell Mull's moonshine making. His was one of the most colorful careers in the business.

Mull was the owner of a small country store and a chicken farm. These two businesses enabled him to buy grain, sugar, jars, and bottles used in the manufacture and sale of whiskey. His operation was unusual because of the quality he exercised in the manufacture of his whiskey and the honesty with which he dealt with his customers.

Mull's business was so profitable that he sent out calendars to his customers at Christmas. He took so much pride in the quality of his product that he had labels printed to paste on the pint bottles. To get a pint of Mull's moonshine, one had only to drive back of the house, toot the car horn, tell who you were, and receive the merchandise through the bedroom window.

After refusing to pay a local deputy more "insurance," Mull's premises were raided and his moonshine confiscated. Mull was tried



Label from Russell Mull's moonshine

before a federal judge where some the area's most prominent citizens testified to the good character of Russell Mull and his role as an outstanding community member.

Following the trial, Mull disposed of all his whiskey except for two kegs which he buried in his garden. From that day until he died, Russell Mull never sold another pint. He joined the church, attended regularly, and became one of the largest contributors to the Baptist church near his home.

Years later while discussing the "good old days," I asked Russ if he knew of anyone who sold good stuff like he used to handle, and the answer was "NO!" It was then that he told me about the kegs. Finally, he dug the kegs up and brought me a jar as a gift. In my opinion, there's nothing in the ABC store that could touch it.

Kickapoo Medicine Co.

In the 1800s, traveling medicine shows constituted one of the most popular and rewarding (to promoters) entertainments to be seen throughout the country.

The shows probably had their beginnings with loquacious peddlers who would hawk their homemade remedies from their backpacks or wagons. Since most of the so called "patent" medicines could be prepared the night before using spring water, sugar, a little alcohol, and flavoring, the peddlers made much more profit from these items than from goods they had to buy and resell.

The profit potential was so great that enterprising merchants gradually increased the entertainment features to attract crowds, until some actually had as many as two or three hundred actors in different shows.

One of the largest of its kind was the Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company which employed 300 Indians, none of them Kickapoos, from Indian agents and traveled by train instead of wagons.

One testimonial that they used was as follows: "I have been troubled for years with a disease that baffled the doctors. I finally bought

and took one 25-cent box of Kickapoo Indian Worm Killer, and soon enough, to my great astonishment, I passed a tapeworm measuring, head and all, a full fifty feet."

In 1838, P.T. Barnum went into the medicine show business with a German named Proler. They traveled in a stylish wagon promoting what they called "Genuine Bear Grease" which promised to cover a bald head with beautiful, glossy, curly hair.

One of the early "tent shows" that came to the area regularly was owned by Jack King who set up on vacant lots. After the first few performances, however, my parents declared this show "off limits" because their jokes were not exactly of the "parlor" variety, and the actresses showed a little more skin than little boys were supposed to see.

If I remember correctly, King himself acted as the comedian. He called himself "Freckles," sported a red wig, snaggled teeth, and had large freckles painted on his face. He often encouraged local talent to perform when the show held its amateur nights.

Before Hollywood took over the entertainment field, the Redpath Chautauqua had a regular circuit in this area. Their tents were erected on old ball park grounds where they put on stage shows, musicals, lectures, and other uplifting performances.

The stage show I remember best was a com-

edy called "Sweet Clover." This was a play in which the star took a pleasure trip to South America on a ship named Sweet Clover only to discover that the vessel hauled fertilizer along with the passengers. When one of the actors pronounced the name of the ship, you could actually smell the odor, and for weeks afterwards little boys would go around town holding their noses and hollering, "Sweet Clover."

Watching television commercials today makes one wonder if anything has changed except for the medium of communication. Instead of catarrh, flux, consumption, and the vapors, we now have "tired blood." If you believe what they tell us, all it takes to put the doctors out of business is a little Sine-Aid, Geritol, Fem-Iron, Hadacol, and Lydia E. Pinkam's Pink Pills for Pale People.

Brown Mountain Spooks

"An orange colored light, looking like a ball of fire, seemed to come straight up from the trees on the distant mountain top. It grew bigger and brighter, flickered for three or four seconds, then went down again, disappearing in the tree tops." (The State).

The above is a description of these mysterious lights that seems to be average. If three different persons were to see the lights at the same time, you might get three different descriptions: one might say the light was orange; one, green; and the other, blue. Number one says it came up, drifted to the left and went out; number two says to the right; and number three might say it went straight up. If there was a fourth person, he might say he couldn't see them at all.

My first sight of the "spooks" was in 1925 when my school class went to the top of Gingercake Mountain for a combination picnic and "light looking." It was so difficult to point out the correct area in which to look at night that I don't believe more than half the class saw anything except each other. Over the years since that trip, I have heard many stories attempting to explain the "lights," but none are very con-

vincing.

Brown Mountain is located in Burke County, about 20 miles north of Morganton, North Carolina off North Carolina Highway 181, and about eight miles southeast of Gingercake Mountain at Jonas Ridge. It's a long, straight-backed ridge about 3,500 feet in elevation with numerous outcroppings of huge, brown and grey colored rock formations.

As a child, I had heard that the National Geographic Society, in cooperation with some federal government agency had studied these lights without finding any satisfactory solution -at least to the local people. They seemed to believe that they were a reflection or refraction from railroad train lights in the neighboring county, but then the old-timers recalled that in 1916 during the "Big Flood," all bridges were washed out, no trains running, and still the lights could be seen.

In 1913, the *Charlotte Observer* had an account of the "spooks" with no apparent solution. I read one story, I believe, in the *Winston-Salem Journal*, about several men who were investigating the lights from the top of Brown Mountain itself when suddenly the "light" appeared, and they all fell to the ground unconscious. This story I find hard to believe. My guess is that the falling down and resultant stupor was caused by the illicit products of a nearby still instead of any act of nature.

A local reputable insurance salesman, and so far as I know, not addicted to tall tales or moonshine, gives the following account of his experiences:

> Several other men and I took a jeep to the top of Brown Mountain in 1963 just to see if we could substantiate these lights. After waiting in the pitch darkness for a long time until we were about to give up and go home, suddenly from nowhere, and from no apparent source, we could see each other in the dark, and even distinguish our finger nails in this ghostly light. It lasted perhaps five to ten seconds, and we were in the dark again. I don't know what it was, but I do know it was."

Over the years there have been numerous efforts to capitalize on the "lights" by constructing towers, seats, or parking facilities and charging an admission fee. None of them have been successful, for the lights can be seen from so many vantage points. The Blue Ridge Parkway, Linville Mountain, Blowing Rock, and many other places provide excellent locations to view the phenomena.

The Ice Man

One of my heroes as a child was the neighborhood ice man. I used to watch for that guy in the summer like I did for Santa Claus in the winter. I suppose my supreme ambition, however, was to remain a little boy forever.

Growing up was a disaster which I still resent. It was so wonderful just to blink an eye and become captain of a pirate ship on the Spanish Main, swinging my cutlass in one hand and pistol in the other.

Or I could straddle a stick and ride my bucking bronco through the cow pasture on to the wide western plains. I'm sure that I lassoed more longhorns, branded more calves, and shot more Indians and outlaws than John Wayne ever did in his prime. Seeing a wild grapevine hanging from a tree transformed me immediately into Tarzan, swinging from limb to limb. No matter that the vine invariably broke, dumping me into a bunch of poison oak and honeysuckle, it was worth it.

On a hot, dusty day in August when the bell on the ice wagon signaled its arrival, every kid in the neighborhood would try to be first to get the "snow" that the ice man made sawing on his block of ice. If you were first and lucky, you

might even get a few slivers of ice from the wagon bed.

In those days everyone had an icebox since there was no such thing as an electric refrigerator in these parts. Those boxes were built quite like refrigerators today except the upper section was designed to hold a 75- or 100-pound block of ice.

Each household was supplied a square cardboard poster with a small window in the bottom. On the back was a circular cardboard "wheel" that could be turned, exposing through the window the number of pounds of ice desired. The bell on the wagon was to alert the housewife to post her sign. Books of tickets were available at the ice house or from the deliveryman good for 10, 15, 25, 50 or 75 pounds.

The ice wagon had a roof over the top to keep out the sun, but was open at the back with a wide step. The horse pulling the wagon was trained to stop at each house along the street. When the iceman saw a sign that read 25 pounds, he would pick up his saw and measure the correct size of the big block, and that's when the fun began. As he pulled that long, coarse saw across the ice, "ice dust" or "snow" would squirt out from both sides while the neighborhood kids were drooling back of the wagon for a chance to scoop up a handful.

The deliveryman wore a leather or rubber

apron with an extra piece to throw across his shoulder. After the ice was cut to size, he would pick it up with his tongs, throw it on his shoulder, and carry it off as it if were as light as a feather.

One of my chores at home was to empty the pan from under the ice box each day as the ice melted into water. If I forgot it, which was not infrequently, the pan would overflow all over the pantry floor, and the mop I had to get. This happened so often that my father finally drilled a hole in the floor, put a funnel in the hole so the water just dripped out into the basement.

Most every Saturday, in very hot weather, we would order extra ice to made ice cream in one of those old-fashioned, hand-cranked freezers. I sure hated to turn the handle, but I didn't mind eating the finished product.

Victorian Foibles

Remember the automobile tail fins of a few years ago? I have often wondered if anyone considered those useless, ridiculous, monstrosities attractive. I'm inclined to believe that some practical joker was just trying to discover how far we idiot consumers would go before rebelling. Yet, ours is not the only generation that has been made ridiculous by designers of fashion and custom. Consider the Victorian era.

Queen Victoria was crowned queen of England in 1838 and two years later married Prince Albert, the gentleman whose picture has been on millions and millions of tobacco cans. She reigned for more than 50 years during the height of the British Empire's most glorious days. For the 50th anniversary of her reign, England put on a spectactular show, called the Golden Jubilee, with dignitaries from all over the world paying honor to this most distinguished lady. Ten years later, an even larger pageant, called the Diamond Jubilee, was displayed with all members of the Commonwealth honored. The period of years just before, during, and after her reign has been known as the Victorian era, which, on a comparative basis, had some remarkable fashions

Speaking of tail fins, did you ever see a "bustle?" This was a wire cage about the size of a peck basket that women fastened over their posterior under their dresses to accent this part of their anatomy. Also in fashion were hoop skirts with a four to five foot spread. Even everyday dresses were long, nearly to the ground, so that girl watchers were fortunate to even catch a glimpse of a trim ankle.

Men who were looking for a wife had to take a whale of a chance. Though it was not uncommon to catch a glimpse of the "great divide" on the ballroom floor, he never knew for sure whether his bride-to-be had two legs or not. The word "leg" was taboo when applied to a female. It was called a "limb." Makes me think of a song they used to sing:

> "After the ball was over, Jennie took out her glass eye;
> Put her cork leg in the corner, took off her bottle of dye.
> Put her false teeth in the water, hung up her wig on the walls,
> Then all went to dreamland...after the ball."

All babies back then were either delivered by the stork or found in a cabbage patch. Even the word "sex" was taboo. So were many other things that are common today. Undergarments worn by women were referred to, if at all, as unmentionables; corsets were a must and sometimes required two people to lace them up the back. Any girl caught dancing, playing cards, smoking, or dating without a chaperone was considered a "fast" woman whose morals

were questionable.

Aunt Nancy Jones, the respected midwife or granny woman who delivered more area babies than all the doctors combined, told about one very prominent, straight-laced, Christian woman who was confined. After an examination Aunt Nancy said, "Mrs. G., I believe you are going to have twins."

"Nonsense," replied Mrs. G. "Only Common people have twins."

Over the years Victorian furniture became more and more fancy with all kinds of gee-gaws, scrolls, crowns, and inlays upon inlays. Many chests and washstands had marble tops which are still in great demand today. Many towns still have a number of houses built during this period that have very fancy "gingerbread" trimming, domes, steeples, gazebos, catwalks, and all kinds of ornamentation on the roofs.

Like the tail fins, these things had no practical purpose, but were merely ornamental, or perhaps an expression by the owners of their newly acquired affluence.

Don't Slam the Door

"I didn't mean to slam the door. In fact, I didn't really slam it, just pushed it open and it slammed itself."

I guess my poor mother admonished me hundreds of times about that screen door, but when your best friend calls for you to come out and play, what's a boy gonna do? He just doesn't walk out the door. He runs. That's when that contrary door would slam itself. Then, when halfway across the street, Mother would call, "Alexander!" When she used that tone of voice, Alexander would jump. "Come back here and shut that door properly." So I would reluctantly go back open the door, and close it very, very carefully.

With so many houses air conditioned today, the old screen doors have about passed into oblivion. Now, with the newfangled door closures, one doesn't hear those old-timey slams and bangs that used to echo up and down the street in the summertime. Gone too are the spacious front porches where neighbors would sit and fraternize in the shank of the evening and courtin' couples would snuggle up in the swing.

Every porch had jardineers and pots of ferns and flowers, comfortable rocking chairs, a

porch swing, and best of all, people.

With our doors tightly closed now, we miss the sights and sounds of the old neighborhood. Kids on their tricycles, others scrambling after lightning bugs, the neighbor's tom cat stalking sparrows, couples strolling around the block and stopping to pass the time of day.

It isn't that people are less friendly than they used to be. They are just more self-centered and afraid. We come home after work and unlock the door that use to stay open, cut on the air conditioning, shut the door, and turn on the "boob-tube." We have forgotten what we are missing.

My grandfather's log house, which he inherited from his father, originally consisted of one large room with a fireplace which was the combined living and master bedroom. The second floor housed a loft bedroom.

About fifteen feet from the main house was a smaller two-story log house that was used for a kitchen with the second story for the hired help. All cooking was done over the large fireplaces. Connecting these two buildings was a roof over that was called a "dog trot" where the numerous hound dogs slept curled against the chimney.

When I became old enough to spend some time there, two wings had been added to the main house. One was a lean-to on the back in which was housed the new kitchen and dining room. The kitchen was equipped with a new

"Majestic" wood stove and the dining room with a long homemade walnut table that would easily seat 12-14 people. The other wing was attached to the end of the house and contained the parlor, guest room, and additional bedrooms upstairs.

At the time of my first visit, no screens had been installed on the windows, and bugs, bees, and flies could fly in one window and hopefully, fly out the other. To keep the flies off the food were what we called "shoo-flies." These were long hickory switches or sticks with shredded paper attached which, when waved through the air, would keep the flies jumping. When fly paper became plentiful, sheets were scattered around with long streamers hanging from ceilings. And, of course, across the front of the whole house was a big front porch. I don't recall any old houses that didn't have front porches, even the tiny one-room cabins.

I remember once complaining to my father about a neighbor who had effectively cut off our "short-cut" through his yard by putting a fence around his whole lot. Dad said then that the bad part about fencing other people out was that those who did it also fenced themselves in. I suppose that's what we are doing to ourselves when we shut the door and cut on the TV.

If you don't have a porch, try sitting in your yard in the moonlight; listen to the katydids, watch the lightning bugs and say hello to your

neighbors. You'll be glad you did.

Longjohns and Featherbeds

In the early part of this century "central heating" was unheard in this part of the world.

There was such a thing as "steam heat," used mostly in public buildings, schools, etc., that consisted of a central steam boiler, located generally in the basement, that was connected by iron pipes to those rattling, hissing, moaning gadgets called radiators. Central heating was the expression used later on to describe a large furnace located in the basement with just one iron grill situated above the furnace. That was the "central" and only source of the heat.

The great majority of homes throughout this whole country were heated with fireplaces. Smaller houses had only one or two fireplaces, while larger two-story houses had as many as six to twelve. It took a lot of wood and a lot of poking to keep those fires going. In my father's home, which was built around 1900, there were seven fireplaces and a flue for a cook stove. I don't remember that we ever had more than three or four fires lit at one time, and that would only be when we had a house full of relatives.

I don't remember that any of the older homes were insulated, and on a cold windy

night every room in the house was mighty drafty. When a woman came in from the cold, the first thing she would do after taking off her coat, was back up to that fireplace. If no strangers were present, she would lift her skirt in the back to warm her backside. It got to be such a habit that I have seen men and women walk into a room in the summertime and head directly for the fireplace or stove.

Here is where the "long johns," heavy knit or flannel underwear with long sleeves and legs, come in. Along about Thanksgiving out of the cedar chests or moth balls came those familiar garments for every member of the family. Children hated them, but they were possibly the only things that warded off pheumonia. Girls in particular despised those itchy winter garments, primarily because there was no way they could hide the bulky wrinkles under the black stockings of the day. Little boys just didn't care. Their stockings were always droopy and wrinkled anyway.

Another practical garment in those days was the "red flannels." These were not necessarily red in color, but were generally referred to by that name. Those were sleeping garments, longsleeved night gowns made of flannel. They would sure keep you warm. However, my biggest problem in the winter was getting to my bedroom from that hot glowing fire in the fireplace. I had to run down that long, cold,

unheated hall and then up those cold stairs and into a cold bed.

Some of you old-timers may still remember the old "feather beds," a mattress stuffed with goose down. Bedded down in one of those beds with a couple of comforters or quilts on top, there was no way you could freeze to death.

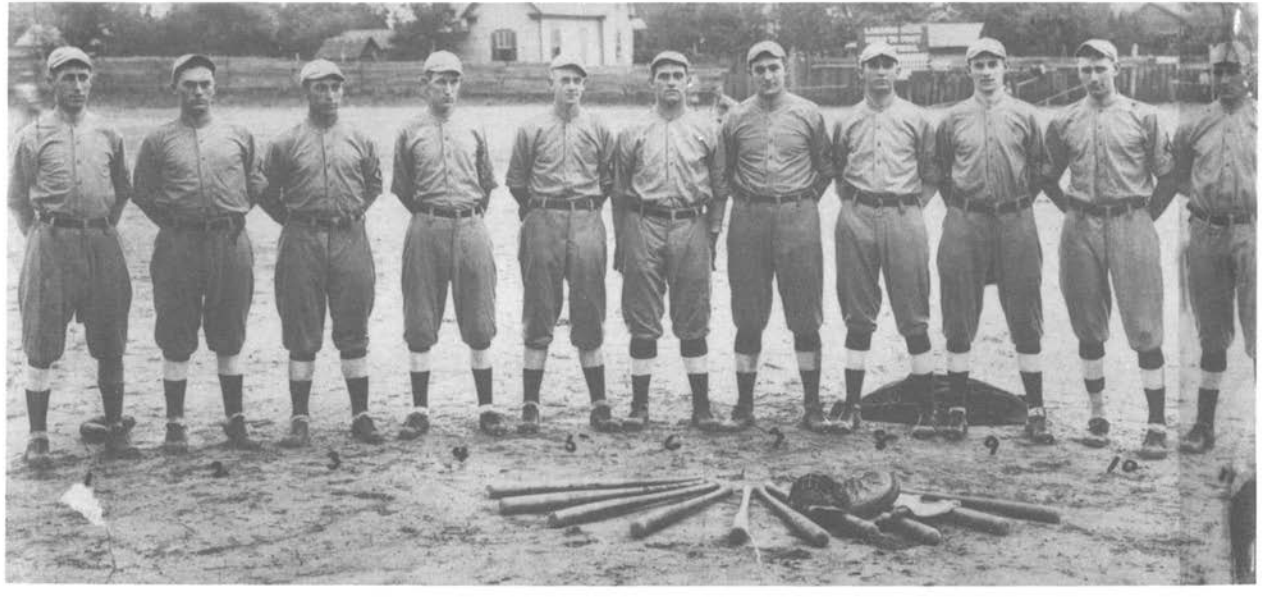
When you hair turns grey or falls out, and you have a lot of miles under your belt, it is pleasant to remember the old horse and buggy days. The times were less frantic, and the main topic of conversation was the weather.

Winning is Everything

Would you know what Harley Goode, Pat Abernathy, "Slats" Ledbetter, Mike Spainhour, Iverson Davis, Lona Jaynes, Will Patton, "Mig" Billings, Worth Parker, Napoleon Avery and Hamp Erwin had in common? They were heroes, that's what—baseball heroes, and along with many others, were granted the red carpet treatment by the area's loyal fans. This area was a hotbed of rabid baseball fans with fine teams, community pride and a fierce desire to win. Their motto was, "We'll win, one way or the other." If we lost on the field, chances were some fans would try to win in the stands or bring home some cracked heads for the effort.

There were no rules concerning eligibility of players in the early days, so a lot of tricks were employed by all the teams. The only thing that really counted was to win. When it became apparent that some rules would have to be observed, leagues were organized over the country and given ratings such as double A, triple A, etc., so that each team could compete against others of equal strength. These were called semi-pro and were generally not allied with "farm" teams that belonged to the Big League teams.

Until strict rules were observed, it was not



Morganton Baseball Team in 1910

uncommon for a team to import a "star" pitcher from out of state for just one or two games. Once when the home team played Hickory, the Hickory team brought most of the best players from the Charlotte team and beat the pants off of us. For the next home game, the Morganton team brought a star pitcher from Tennessee and some players from Asheville to beat the tar out of Hickory.

Since gate receipts were seldom sufficient to cover costs, many area folks contributed their time and money toward the support of local teams. Community members were especially supportive of their teams. One season alone drew more than 66,000 fans at the ball park. Downtown stores closed during games because all their customers and employees were at the ball game.

The players themselves were rarely professional ball players. Most considered baseball their summer or second job. One area player, who was a four-star collegiate athlete, funded a medical school education by playing baseball during his summers.

An amusing story among the old-timers is that of the cement finisher who doubled as a ball player. He had to finish up a job and couldn't get to the game until the ninth inning. He rushed into the park covered with wet cement, grabbed a bat, and hit the winning home run.

Child's Play

Unfortunately, I'm not up to date on the younger generation's activities, but I can recollect a lot of the games that kids used to play. We didn't have the toys, bikes, television, or manufactured games that they have today, so most childhood activities consisted of things that cost no money, only a joy of life.

Younger boys and girls played together until they reached the age at which separate games were more appealing to them. Little girls wanted to play "house" or "paper dolls," and little boys would play "Cowboys and Indians." During this transition stage, they would sometimes swap: "I'll play cowboy with you if you'll play house with me."

One of the earliest group games was "Ring Around the Roses." Children would hold hands in a circle while singing this little song:

> Ring around the roses,
> A pocket of posies.
> One - two - three,
> Squat, little Josie.

At the word "squat" everyone would squat and the last one down was "out."

Do you remember "Drop the handkerchief?" Children would circle as above and whoever

was "it" would run around the outside and drop a handkerchief behind someone. If that person was able to outrun the other back to the starting point, then the other was "it" and would have to do the same.

Other group games were "Button, Button, Who's Got the Button?," "Kick the Can," "Blind Man's Bluff," "Gossip," "Giant Steps," "Pretty Girl's Station," "Pop the Whip," "In and Out the Window," or "London Bridge is Falling Down." "London Bridge" was especially popular with us, and I still remember the song we sang while playing:

> London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down.
> London Bridge is falling down, my fair lady.

Kids would form two lines, holding hands across the lane singing this song. Those at the end of the line would run through the lane and at the words "My Fair Lady," the gate would close by bringing the arms down around whoever happened to be there.

"Red Rover" was played by forming two lines, holding hands as tightly as possible and chanting "Red Rover, Red Rover, let (calling someone's name in the other line) come over." Then the one called would try to break through the line and if unsuccessful, he would have to join the opposition.

When there were not enough children for group games, there was always "Hopscotch," "Skip the Rope," "Jack Rocks," "Marbles,"

"Holey-Roley," "Paper Dolls," or "Mumbley-Peg."

Now "Mumbley-Peg" was a good one. Played with a dual bladed pocket knife, the short blade was opened fully and the long blade only halfway. Balancing the knife on the ground with the forefinger under the handle, you would flip it into the air. If the knife came down on its side, it didn't count. If it rested on the big blade and the handle, the count was 25. If the big blade stuck into the ground, it counted 50. If both the small and large blades were touching the ground, the count was 75. If the small blade stuck up, the count was 100. The loser would have to kneel on the ground with hands behind his back and pull a peg or stick out of the ground with his teeth.

We used to make what we called "tractors" using only a rubber band, match stick, spool and a piece of crayon. We would take the empty spool and put a rubber band through the hole, fastening one end of the band to one end of the spool, cut off a piece of crayon or bee's wax about the size of a washer with a hole in the middle for the rubber band to pass through, then stick a kitchen match in the loop of the band. When wound up, it would crawl along the floor or ground like a Caterpillar tractor.

A trip to Asbury's Pond for a swim on a hot afternoon was a real treat for us youngsters. The admission fee was ten cents and worth every

penny of it.

Before the days of autos, radio, or television, the thing I remember with the most pleasure in the evenings were the tales my father would tell around the fire. It would always begin with, "Dad, tell us a story," and generally he would. The tales were completely ridiculous, but delightful for us children.

Tin Lizzies & Whimmey-Dittles

They called 'em "Tin Lizzies," "Flivers," or "Skeeters," and on cold frosty mornings when they wouldn't start, they called them some other names that you ladies might not want to hear. Scornful, yet affectionate names were given to one of the simplest, most useful, enduring mechanical devices devised by man—the Model T Ford.

It is probably second only to the invention of the wheel and the wheelbarrow in the impact it had on the world. The manufacture of the Model T and the development of the assembly line was the pattern for the Industrial Revolution which is the basis of our prosperity today.

The early Fords had canvas tops, open on all sides with a two-piece windshield which one could open in hot weather. There was no door on the driver's side of the car. The wheels had wooden spokes like those on old wooden wagon wheels. A magneto which had to be cranked by hand was used in place of a battery.

In the early days, people would heat some rocks or bricks and put them in a sack to keep their feet from freezing while on a winter's drive. Later, someone invented a contraption that fastened onto the manifold to bring heat,



A collection of Tin Lizzies

along with exhaust fumes, into the vehicle.

The Model T sat very high off the road in order to cross over stumps and enable it to ford creeks or rivers without dragging. The roads were so bad that most cars could not make it from one town to another, but the faithful Model T could go almost anywhere.

A Model T that was no longer on the road still had its uses. The last task I remembered for those old flivers was as wood saws. After the body was removed, a saw rack could be fastened to the frame, and when one wheel was jacked off the ground, it would really make the saw buzz.

When the Ford Motor Company ceased manufacturing the Model T there were literally thousands still operating. Back then, kids in high school would chip in to buy a Model T for about $50. They would strip it down and have brackets made to lower the center of gravity. We called them "skeeters," and a kid with just a little mechanical ability could keep one running with a couple of tin cans, some bailing wire, a pair of pliers, and a screwdriver.

Younger children had they playtoys too. We had things like "whimmey-dittles," a toy whittled out of wood that was fun to make as well as play with. Rag dolls were easily made or repaired with a needle and thread. Skateboards were made using just one skate. One half of a skate was attached to each end of a plank about

two feet long. They were not as fast nor as dangerous as the skateboards in use today, but a lot of fun just the same.

Shooting the Anvil

Before the days of split second communication, country people had their own methods of spreading news or celebration. Various forms of fireworks, gunblasts, whistles, and bells were used to alert folks of election results and holiday festivities.

One of the most popular forms of noise-making for the old-timers was known as "shooting the anvil." This was done by scooping out a depression in a chopping block or on top of a stump. The hole was then filled with black gunpowder and covered by an anvil. A mighty blow on top of the anvil with a sledge hammer resulted in an explosion whose boom could be heard for miles.

Once the anvil was used to spread the wrong news through a mountain community. The year was 1912, and the setting was Swain County on the Little Tennessee River. Woodrow Wilson was running for President on the Democratic ticket against Teddy Roosevelt, the Bull Moose party's representative, and William Howard Taft, the Republican candidate.

Most mountain people were staunch Roosevelt supporters, and when news mistakenly filtered into the mountain community that

Roosevelt had won, this called for a grand celebration.

In Swain County they used two anvils instead of one. One anvil was on the ground with black powder sprinkled on top. The second anvil capped the first, and the powder was lit with a red hot wire or poker. To make the sound carry further, they would always go to the top of the nearest mountain. The anvil's resulting noise was like a clap of thunder, and the origin of the boom could always be spotted by the large bonfire built there.

It happened to be Saturday night when word came in and the shooting started. Just imagine the fun. A half dozen bonfires on as many different mountain tops with thunder claps answering each other from peak to peak. They were enjoying it so much that no one noticed that midnight had passed and they were actually shooting their anvils on Sunday morning, except the preacher!

You can imagine what the sermon that Sunday was about. It was four days later before the community discovered that Woodrow Wilson had, in fact, won the election.

Children were not without their own noise makers. When I was a youngster, the only noise makers we were allowed to use were firecrackers and not very big ones at that. We had to use a "joss" stick, which was a slow burning wick, to light firecrackers and roman

candles instead of matches. Regardless of the weather, as the old year gave way to the new, we would always go out on the front porch and listen to the noisy celebrations.

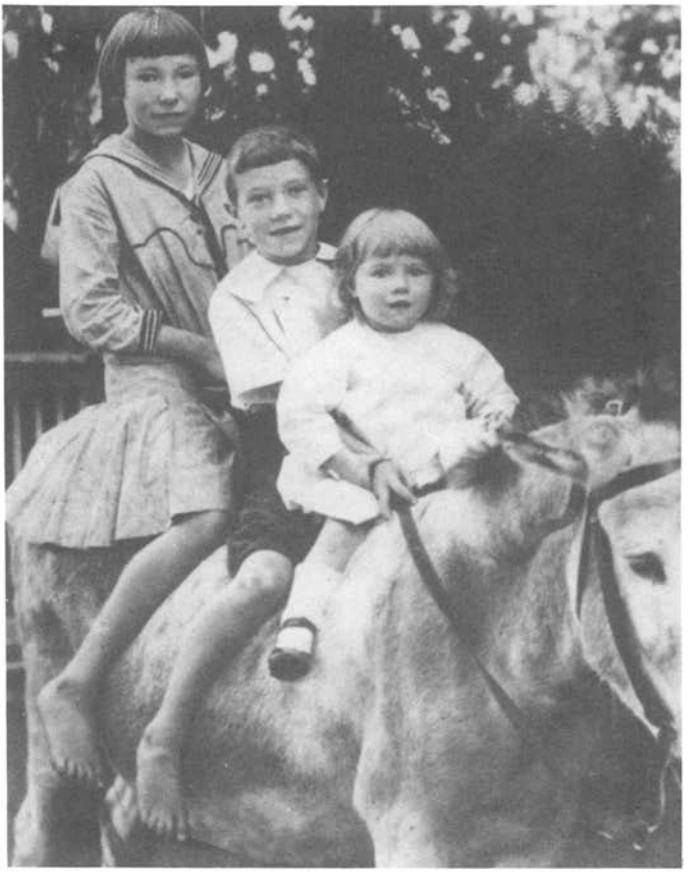
Welcoming in the New Year was a cause for much celebration. Factory whistles would blow, bells would ring, guns and firecrackers would go off while the old Atwater-Kent radio was blaring out, "Should Auld Acquaintances Be Forgot?"

The town of Cherryville still boasts of its own "New Year Shooters." This group of men and boys keep the ancient practice of blasting the New Year in alive. On New Year's Eve they gather from miles around, travel from place to place, and shoot their guns and firecrackers most of the night.

Childhood Memories

Things that are most memorable from childhood are those that were either pleasurable, frightening, very happy or unhappy episodes. My first chore around the house was to carry in wood for the kitchen stove. My next chore was to feed and water the chickens. I will never forget that ornery old rooster who used to flog me every time my back was turned. Finally, after being conned by my older brother, I learned to milk the cow and will always remember how that ungrateful beast used to switch her tail, loaded with cockleburs, against the side of my face, or how she would raise her foot and stick it in the milk pail just when I had about finished milking.

Romance was brought into my life at the very early age of three years. Mary Tucker Jeter lived just across the street from our home on Avery Avenue, and we both had older sisters who had acquired a new-fangled picture-taking machine called a Kodak. After shooting up all the local scenery, they decided they needed some human interest pictures for posterity, so they persuaded Tuck and me to pose, hugging each other. This early experience was to have dire consequences during my first day at school.



Back then, first grade was taught in two sections. The first section of children came around 9:00 a.m. and stayed until noon. The second section, which I was assigned to, came about noon. On this first day everyone came early and

waited until the first section was dismissed. When I arrived, I could hardly believe my eyes. There was about a dozen of the prettiest little girls ever assembled in one place, all dressed up with bow ribbons in their hair. It was enough to make a "man-of-the-world" lose his cool. True to my early training, I decided that the thing to do was to hug every one of them, but would you believe that those little varmints wouldn't cooperate at all? They squealed, hollered, and ran, creating so much commotion that our teacher came out of her class to find out what the riot was all about. When she discovered that it was only a miniature wolf in the biddie pen, she grabbed the would-be Don Juan by the ear and sat him in a chair in front of all the strange kids in the first section. I can tell you, except for making ugly faces, it was many years before I had anything else to do with women.

Back then, the national pastime was not baseball, football, or golf. It was marbles. Words like "taw," "agate," "pea-dab," "glassie," "steelie," or "knucks" were as commonplace as home runs, touchdowns, or field goals today.

There was not much paving or traffic in those days, and everywhere one would go, he could see the circles drawn on the sand-clay street or walkways. Around these circles would be numerous barefoot boys on their knees, shooting marbles for fun or for "keeps."

Some boys practiced and played so much that their knuckles would become raw and bloody. Many of the "pros" would have leather slings made to cover their knuckles so that they wouldn't become so worn, and their mothers would make knee pads to save patching so many pants. The best shooters didn't like to play for fun if they could find someone to play for "keeps."

Another game was to dig several holes in a straight line, and each player, in turn, would try to shoot his "taw" into the holes. If he missed, his taw would remain where it lay until another player could shoot. If one player was able to hit the other's taw, the loser was out of the game. If they were playing "knucks," the loser would have to clinch his hand into a first, place it on the ground, and the winner would shoot his taw at the knuckles. It could be pretty painful, especially if the other player had a steelie for a taw.

Baseball was not very popular with the little kids because of the lack of equipment. Virtually no one had gloves, mitts, real bats or balls. Bats were made like a paddle from a piece of plank. Balls were merely strings wound around something like a marble and would unravel with each hard blow of the bat. Nevertheless, what was lacking in equipment was made up by noisy enthusiasm.

The two most exciting days in the year were

Easter and Christmas. On Easter Sunday, if the weather was warm and clear, I could take off my winter shoes, roll up my "long handles" and go barefoot. Just thinking how good that cool, green grass felt squishing around between my toes makes me want to try it again. This didn't mean that the "long handles" came off at Easter. By no means could we get rid of that itchy blanket before May 1.

Christmas, with all the excitement of Santa Claus and presents, also brought some unusual goodies. In addition to the fruitcake soaked with grape juice, there were always chocolate, silver, coconut, and caramel cakes. The biggest trouble was trying to decide which one, and only one, piece you would rather have.

Remember when the streets were sand-clay? Sand would be hauled from the river in wagons and spread over the red clay street, making a pretty good surface for the traffic at that time. When the fresh sand was spread, all the children in the neighborhood would gather in the streets to build their sand castles, dams, and fortifications until the first rains would muddy them up. Then they would take to the trees for their games.

Some places were off limits to the young'uns. One in particular was a little one-room, frame building on the corner of Queen and North Greene streets in Morganton. This store had no windows and only one door. Through the walls

were little holes, said to be bullet holes. This was a barroom where they sold "likker," and we were not even allowed to go close to it for fear we might hear something we were not supposed to hear.

During "court week," all vacant lots were filled with men and their wagons, horses, and campfires at night, which made a fascinating sight for a youngster, but this also was taboo. These men were known to sometimes drink, cuss, and "meby" fight a little, and kids were not supposed to know about this either.

I remember the false armistice during World War I when everyone thought the war was over. Bells were ringing, bonfires were built in the streets, and it looked like an old-fashioned Fourth of July celebration. I celebrated by buying a whole nickel's worth of candy at one time.

People were so exhuberant and happy for the false one that when the real armistice was announced, all the zip was gone. For many years after this war, one could see the army jackets, wrap-around "leggins," puttees, hats and overseas caps still worn by the ex-soldiers and their kin. Nothing was wasted back then, and even today you can occasionally see one of those jackets still in use.

It was long about then that I got my first lasting impression of war. Every neighborhood had its own gang of boys who played together, had their own territory, and with the war going

on, marched and played soldier. On this occasion we were invaded by a gang from another neighborhood. Nobody really did any fighting. It was all bluff. Maybe a few small rocks were thrown and the invading group retreated. It was here I learned that it's sometimes better to let well-enough alone. I thought I could lick this other boy with one hand tied behind me, so I started chasing him. I ran after him until I was out of breath when suddenly he turned around and poked me right in the nose, and the blood started flying. That ended the battle, and I haven't cared for war since.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

J. ALEXANDER MULL and GORDON BOGER were both longtime residents of Morganton, North Carolina. They were also frequent collaborators having written *Mountain Yarns, Legends, and Lore*, and *Tales of Old Burke* together. Boger passed away in Morganton, North Carolina, on October 3, 1986. Mull passed away in 1982, also in Morganton.